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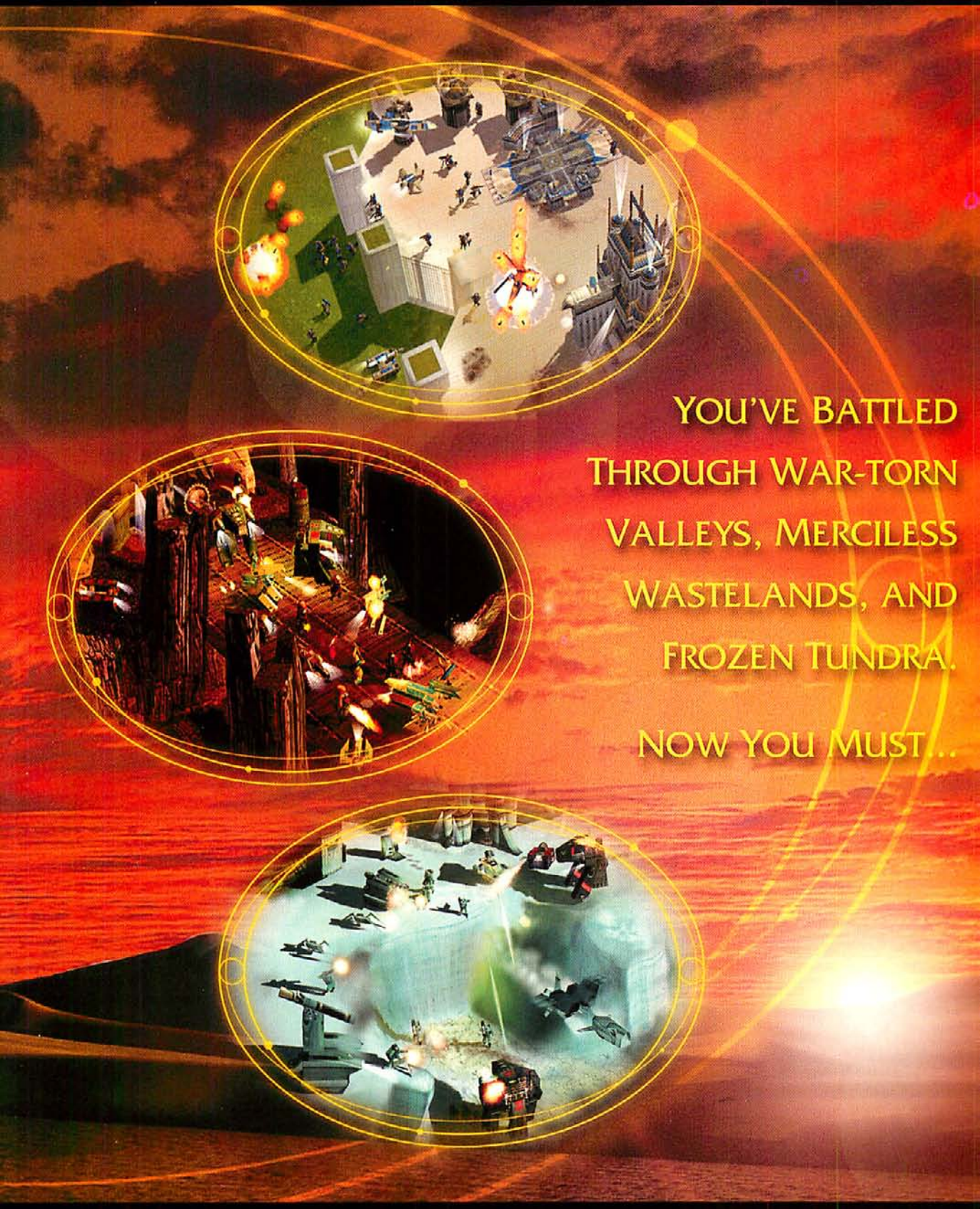
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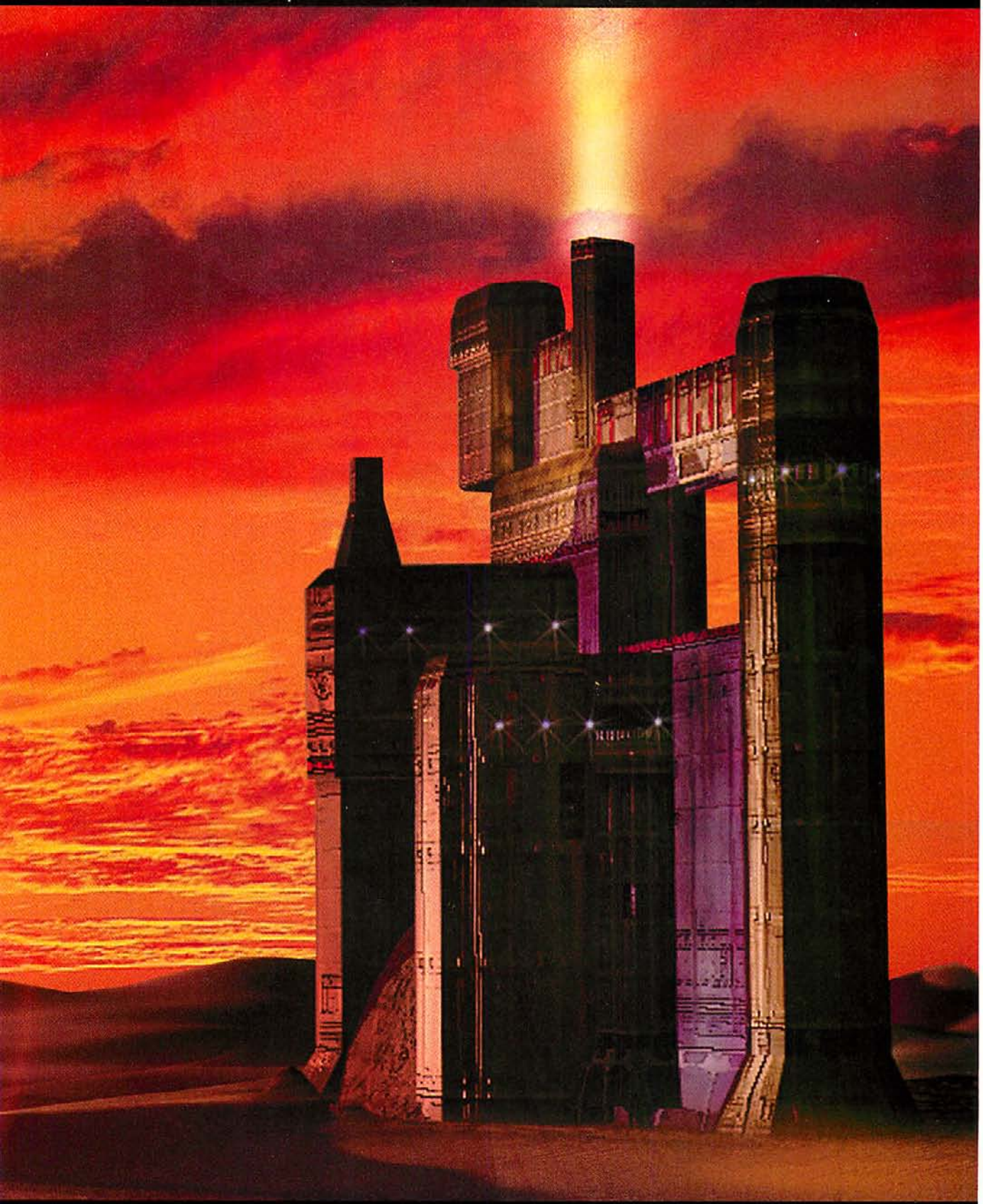
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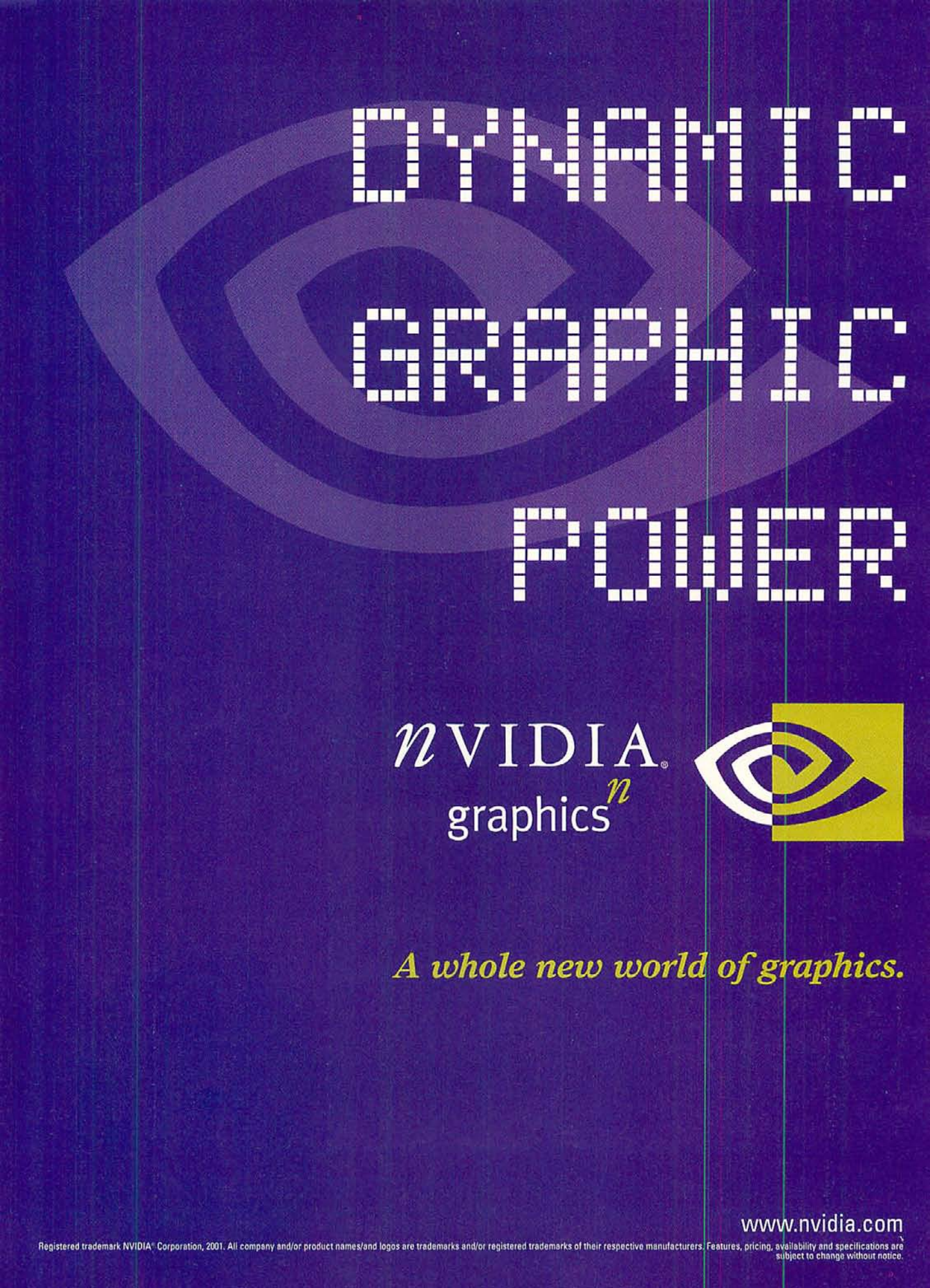
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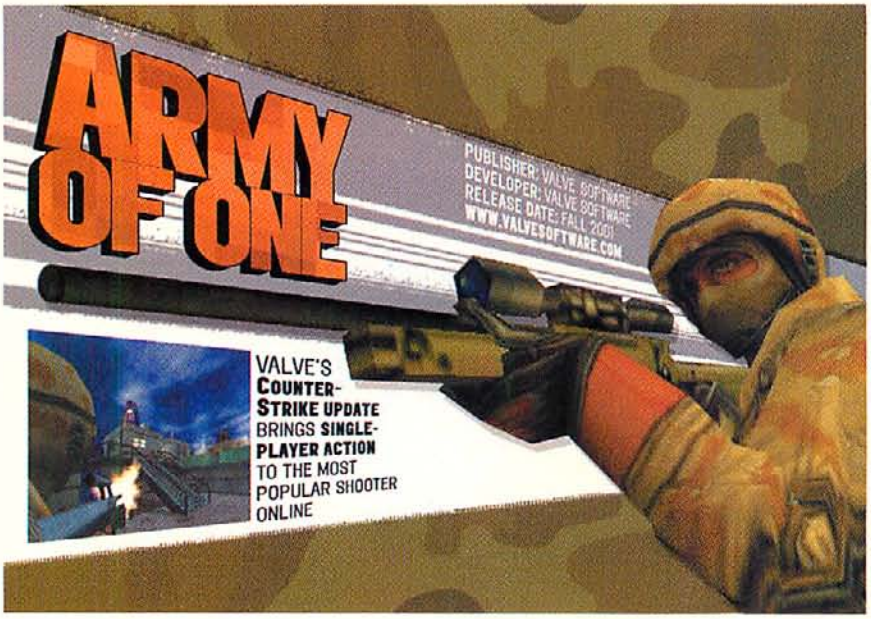
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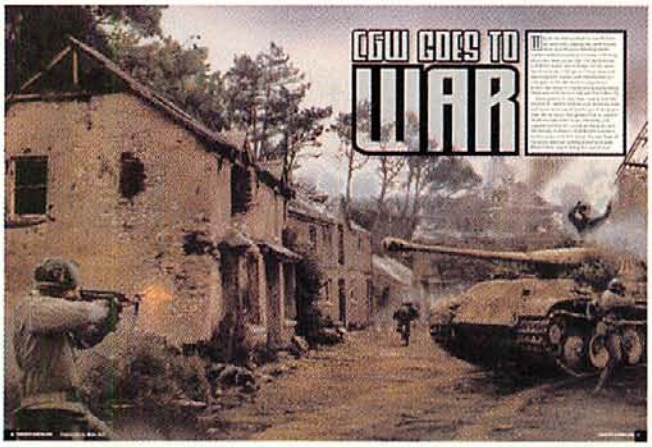


50 COVER STORY

COUNTER-STRIKE

Just call it the little mod that could. COUNTER-STRIKE mania is sweeping the Internet, with thousands of people going online everyday to defuse bombs, rescue hostages, and engage in shootouts that would make Wyatt Earp wet his chaps. Now Valve, creator of the original HALF-LIFE, is creating a single-player version that should be as fun and exciting as playing with your buddies.

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GEORGE JONES

Press Start to Continue



Two years ago I moved from the online world back to *Computer Gaming World*. I loved what I saw. The magazine's prestige combined with the editors' enthusiasm for gaming renewed my passion and allowed me to completely immerse myself in PC games again. In the process, I feel like I've become much more analytical, mature, and even philosophical about our industry and hobby. Or maybe it was just turning 30.

Now, I'm returning to the online world to build a series of next-generation sites for *CGW* and sister publications *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, *Official PlayStation Magazine*, and *Expert Gamer*. I couldn't resist the challenge of building a world-class site that really meant something to gamers, now that a large number of gaming sites have flared and fizzled like so many Roman candles.

It will be a fascinating journey: Can I bring my heightened sense of gaming into the more immediate environment of the Internet? I'll find out. Hopefully, you will too—send me your email address and I'll put you on the update list. In the meantime I'm leaving you in the very capable hands of someone you're probably quite familiar with. Want to know who? Just turn to the last page of the magazine...and may God help you.

■■■

I've learned a lot in the last two years about games *and* writing. Not surprisingly, similar principles apply to both. As I leave the *CGW* fold, I thought I'd share some of what I've learned:

Lead with a bang If you don't capture the reader—or the gamer—right from the start, you're fighting an uphill battle the rest of the way. In gaming, this means an interesting, provocative, highly engaging opening sequence.

Listen ...to yourself, to your thoughts and feelings as you play through a game, and then translate that into your article. The same goes for building a game. Real emotions make for great experiences. And always listen to the public—they're the ones who count.

Looks count You can't put out a magazine that looks like crap and expect people to like it. Similarly, you can't design a game that features solid brown environments or uses the same tired camera angles. This doesn't mean that a game's graphics need to be cutting edge. Look at DIABLO II or Eidos' upcoming ANACHRANOX—both compensate for outdated graphics with gameplay and presentation.

Resist the cliché Kick ass. Sucks. Not your daddy's _____. All that and a bag of chips. Postapocalyptic world. Jumping puzzles. Big-breasted, bimbo female characters. Hey, game journalists and game designers alike are still working on this one. But in any medium, great stories transcend the typical.

Keep writing to george_jones@ziffdavis.com *whenever the urge strikes. And check out the very beginnings of the new CGW website at* ***www.computergaming.com.***

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LETTERS

Letter of the Month

I hope you accept Olaf Karis' advice and begin to pick on individual states once you are through with Canada. If so, I would like to suggest that you start with my home state, New Mexico. We are an ideal target for your ridicule for at least seven reasons:

1. Nobody knows whether we are really a state or not, including the people who work for the U.S. Post Office. Consequently, we only get our mail, including *CGW*, occasionally, so there is less chance you will anger anyone as you did with the Canadians, who appear to have a pretty good postal system.

2. The U.S. government hates us so much that they tried to eliminate the entire state last summer during a "controlled burn." That only worked for the northern portion of the state, so I think they will next try a nuclear "accident."

3. Our governor, Gary Johnson, has advocated legalizing drugs (in the pages of magazines like *Playboy*). This is because he realizes we are all stoners, and without legalized drugs, they might as well put a fence around the state and call us the New Mexico Penal Colony.

4. We are next to Texas, which must count for something.

5. Our major crop, after marijuana of course, is the chili, a food (fruit or vegetable?) with virtually no nutritional value.

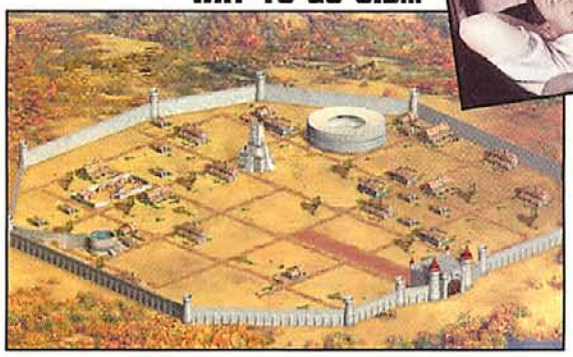
6. We rank 50th out of all 50 states in most categories like "Percentage of people who are literate," "Per-family income," and "Percentage of people with an I.Q. score over 14."

7. Now that we lost our baseball team, one of our biggest sporting events is the Demming Duck Race held at Demming, New Mexico. (Honest, I am not making this up!!!)

If you don't choose us, you might consider Idaho. Any state that has "Famous Potatoes" on its license plates is asking for it.

Todd L. VanPool

WAY TO GO SID...





Sid Meier: Sadist

I was shocked and horrified when I saw the May issue of *CGW* in my mailbox. The cover screamed out at me—CIV III.

The original CIVILIZATION wreaked havoc on my freshman year in college. CIV II made a mockery of my second year in law school. Now, five years later, I am finally holding down a steady job and functioning as a reasonably productive member of society, and Sid Meier does THIS. Even with the release more than six months away, I am absolutely certain that CIVILIZATION III will ruin my life. Sid, for the love of God, please stop!

Ryan Dennard
Friendswood, Texas

Did the Ending of HALF-LIFE Suck? (SPOILER ALERT!)

I have always noticed a tendency on the part of *CGW* to overlook the glaring flaws at the end of HALF-LIFE. Yes, a cool game in design and execution, but I am wondering how you can mark UNDYING down for its "flagging conclusion," yet never once since the release of HALF-LIFE have I seen appropriate criticism for its complete dropping of the plot in the final scene, the failure to deal with the moral problem of slaying aliens who (as we discover at the end) were merely defending their homes from the human invaders, or the senseless and unforgivable SUPER MARIO moving-platform jumpathon in the last levels. Talk about a flagging conclusion! The coolness of the rest of the game just made this lame endgame all the more painful by contrast.

Maybe *CGW* liked the rest of the game so much that you are willing to overlook the disappointing conclusion. I can accept that. But will you at least admit once in print that the ending did not live up to the rest of the game? It would cause me to grind my teeth less every time I read that HALF-LIFE is the game to which all other first-person shooters should measure up. Thanks for listening,

Eric

Like everyone else, the CGW *editors were divided in their opinion of the infamous Xen levels. The original reviewer, Jeff Green, had no trouble with them (surprising, given his lack of coordination), and thus did not downgrade the game for them. As far as the "moral problem" goes—c'mon Eric, they were aliens! Of course we had to kill 'em!*

More Colossal Games!

I have to say that your "10 Colossal Games We Want Made" (May 2001) was one of the best articles you guys have ever written, in my opinion. I hope you write more articles like that. I always have ideas for games myself. I'm sure almost all gamers do. That article showed a spark, if not a solar flare, of imagination on your part. My favorites were MONSTER and WRATH OF THE GODS. Those games make a lot of sense and sound really fun. Maybe you could have a section in your letters portion of the magazine in which fellow gamers could contribute ideas.

Ben H.

Actually, not a bad idea. We'll get the ball rolling with Mr. Lavaia's idea, below.

After reading your article "10 Colossal Games We Want Made," I thought of a

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LETTERS

game I would want made. I'm pretty sure that it can't be made though, due to all the copyright laws, but I'll tell you anyway, because you guys are awesome. I want there to be a first-person shooter with all the people from the MARIO collection. You know, starting off as Wario, picking up a rocket launcher. Timing the explosion just right so that it whizzes down the dark corridor and blows that stupid plumber's head off. Hahaha. Or finding a sniper rifle and aiming it so that you can shoot the stupid little mushroom man right between the eyes to shut up his annoying voice. It could always be a mod to QUAKE III or HALF-LIFE; that would be cool too. Just as long as I get to kill Mario for once. And yes, I know I'm a sadistic freak, but I think that game would go far.

Andrew Lavaia

You Call That Music?

Was your article about Jeremy Soule (May 2001) really written by Alex Handy, or did he just copy this nauseating bit of marketing fluff verbatim from Soule's agent? While Soule is certainly not without talent, the comparison to John Williams was outrageous. And bringing up Vivaldi and Rachmaninov!?! Have you no shame? Talk about hyperbole's hyperbole.

Cal Ferrell
Los Angeles, CA

Actually, Alex meant Steve Vivaldi and Joey "Spike" Rachmaninov, a little-known klezmer duo from Pittsburgh. Hope that clears things up.

Xbox vs. PC

The "Wil Power" article (Hardware, May 2001) is right about how the Xbox is no threat to the PC. It never was, but he got the reasons all wrong. He was trying to compare apples and oranges—both are gaming machines, but they are quite different.

The reason people won't abandon their PCs for Xboxes is not that the PC will have better hardware and the people who buy the Box will curse their traitorous ways months later, but simply that it's a console, not a PC.

For example, when computer hardware surpassed that of the PlayStation, people didn't immediately sell their PlayStation and buy a computer simply because the computer hardware was better—they stayed with the PlayStation because they liked its type of games, ease of use, lower price, etc. So the opposite works too: When the Xbox comes out, PC gamers won't abandon their computers, they will stay because of their computers' upgradability, a broader range of games, better Internet capabilities, and so on.

P.S. As a Canadian, I laugh my ass off at your Canadian Corner, and I am sickened by how whiny my fellow countrymen are being aboot the whole thing, eh.

Mark Toye

CGW Unfair to Shadowknights!

I enjoyed reading your write-up of the new EVERQUEST expansion (June 2001), as it was chock-full of good infobits. However, you made one glaring error. In the description of the new Beastlord class, you state that it's "the first class that lets you be a 'tank'....while also being able to conjure a pet." I personally think that a lot of existing Shadowknights would be sorry to hear this. They have been "tanking" and conjuring pets for quite a while now.

Other than that, the article was great! Keep up the good work.

Jay Henningsen

CGW Unfair to Drudge Prowlers!

Your article "Massively Macintosh??" (Inside Gaming, May 2001) stated that CLAN LORD was bucking the tradition by using original creatures, not a single orc. You then went on to say that EVERQUEST, ASHERON'S CALL, and ULTIMA ONLINE could learn from this game's originality.

I would like to point out that ASHERON'S CALL is extremely original, as far as creatures go. That is the greatest jewel of the game: originality. There are no orcs, goblins, trolls, or anything like that! ASHERON'S CALL has some of the neatest and most original creatures out there: Lithos Lugians, Banderling Captians, and Drudge Prowlers, just to name a few. I think you should give ASHERON'S CALL some credit for not putting in the "traditional" creatures.

You guys do put out a great magazine. Keep it up.

Channing Congdon

How (Poorly) We Rate

I can't believe that you had the nerve to denounce *Wayne's World* as "weak" (Reviews Opener, June 2001). How can you denounce one of the landmark movies of the-generation-that-came-a-few-years-before-I-did? *Wayne's World* is by far the most excellent film in history. And to think *Dumb & Dumber* could beat it? That movie is horrible! Okay, sure, Terrance and Philip WERE funny, but *South Park* is old. And I don't know who the dude with a harmonica is but *Wayne's World* still deserves at LEAST a four-star rating. I feel insulted.

P.S. I just noticed you put Celine Dion under "abysmal." Thanks, you are forgiven now. :)

Blair Frandeen

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Canadian Corner: Because We Just Can't Stop

I would like to apologize to *Computer Gaming World* on behalf of the Dominion of Canada for letters received in anger at your policy of making fun of the Canadian people. These letters do not reflect the views of the Canadian government or the majority of the Canadian people. We realize that Americans feel the need to make fun of foreign countries. We realize that such Canadian customs as free health care, gun control, respecting the environment, and being nice to each other are ideas most Americans hate and fear. This is similar to the Canadian fear of Southern Americans, American teenagers, and the Republican party. We hope these letters have not upset your publication in any way, shape, or form. Thank you and have a nice day.

Cameron, Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bureau of Apologies

Well, finally! It's about time someone apologized!

Hello, eh. I'm a Canadian just like the others who've mailed in to *CGW*. The walls of my igloo are covered with your articles. The bumper sticker on my bobsled reads "I read *CGW* biquarterly!" We up here, just over the Vermont/Canada border, don't get mail too often. In fact, I don't even know if this is getting to you. I inscribed this on some seal skin that I saved from a meal a few months back. I walked through kilometers of snow to get to the nearest messenger penguin, who then, I hope, waddled the letter to a sympathetic American over the border. Anyhow, I love the magazine, and I hope that when computers are invented up here I'll get to try these computer games.

Good bye, eh!

Warren Lisak
Somewhere in Canada

Just finished reading the Letters section in the May issue and I have only one thing to say. We are not all Quebec-, Alaska-, and Ottowa[sic]-born people. You are forgetting all the people who come from the OTHER places. What about the Cheds and the Mennos—we're here too. We play games as well. I think you should set up a Cheds corner as well.

P.S. Your delivery to Ontario does suck.

daedalus_9

Cheds and Mennos? What are those? Penguins?

In reference to another Canadian writer: What do you mean we "ANGLO-CANADIANS" don't have a sense of humor? I find that comment an insult. We're all Canadians (Anglo or Francophone) and like the Americans, we all have different views on what is funny and what is not! Some like slapstick, some like insults, and some like gossip humor (the list can go on!). I purchase *CGW* every month and although I will admit that some of the staff remarks are absolutely insulting, some of them are great indicators of how much "cultural exposure" we have yet to give to the rest of North America.

Keep up the good work guys!

P.S. Michel, the Leafs made the playoffs...the Habs are golfing!

Wayne J. Tan
Toronto

Leafs and Habs? What are those? Penguins?

I have one thing to say regarding the monthly bashing of Canadians: All right, so they have dogsleds and disfigured bacon, but hasn't anybody there at *CGW* heard of *Rush*? You know, "Fly By Night," "Tom Sawyer," "Working Man"... those Canadians may be a buncha fur-trappin', maple-sappin' drunkards, but at least they produce good music, EH?!!!

P.S. Except for Celine Dion (shudder).

Kevin Kane

Hey, guys. Just writing to point out the fact that, despite all your recent Canada bashing, all the ignorant comments, all the stereotyped statements, all the idiotic letters from ignorant readers, you've forgotten somewhere along the way that your "emperor-god of PC RPGs," the almighty BALDUR'S GATE 2: SHADOWS OF AMN, is as Canadian as I am. If you don't stop with the comments, we might just throw down a gaming embargo on you all, and then where would you be? Stuck playing department store rejects and hunting sims, that's where. If you want your fix of NEVERWINTER NIGHTS, you'd better watch your mouths, eh?

Have a good day!

Eric Lord
Montreal, Canada

Finally, someone gives us a good reason to stop!

The World according to America



I have to chuckle a bit when our American friends choose to make jokes about our *advanced society*. Actually, the UN has voted Canada the best country to live in for I think, like, four years in a row! It's quite normal for Americans to hide fear with humor (j/k). Anyway, I thought you guys might enjoy an email I received on the same day I read "Canadian Corner" in Issue 202. Keep up the great reviews! Never fall to the tyranny of console gaming!!!!

P.S. It's pronounced *Jean Cret-yen.*

Mark Fischer

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COMMANDOS 2



Natasha "Lips" Nikochevski
Seductress- Expert in distraction and manipulation



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Coming Summer 2001

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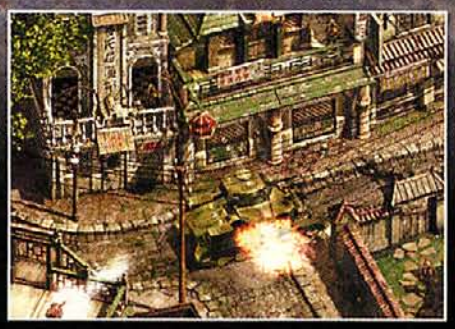
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Disney INTERACTIVE

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In stores May 15th.

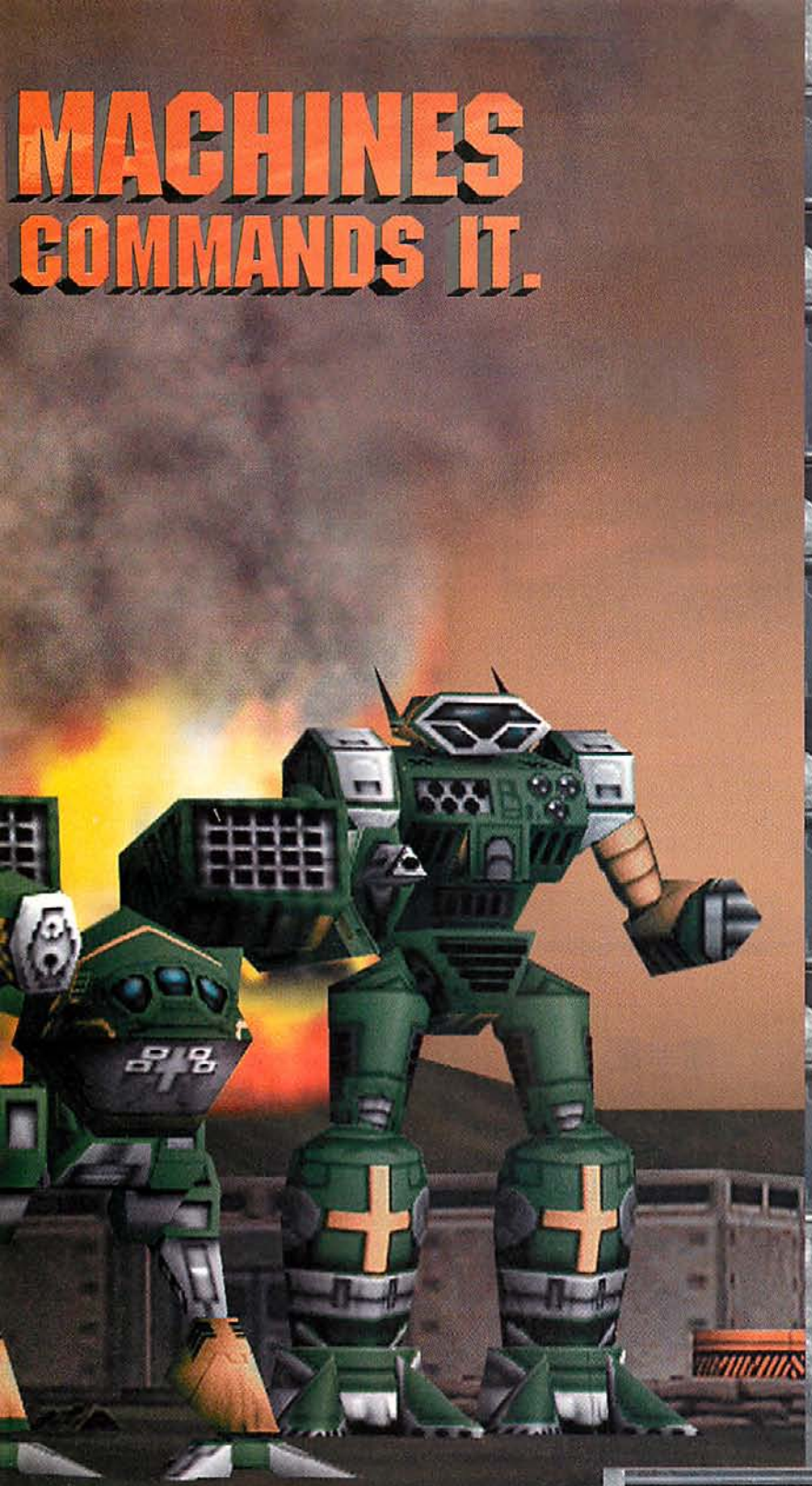
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Lara's Last Leap?

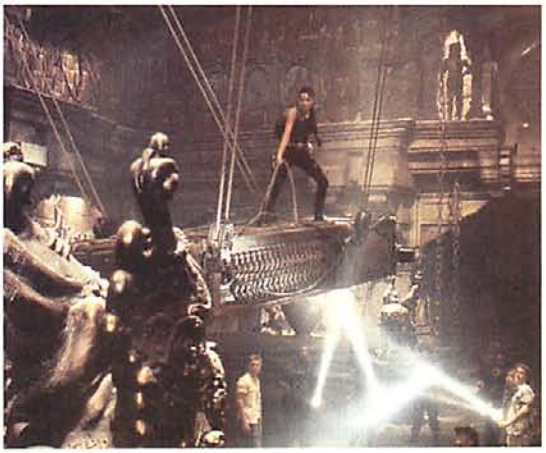
Curvaceous character's future may hinge on movie's success

Consider for a moment how critical the month of June is for Lara Croft. This month, the video-game star makes her feature film debut in Paramount Pictures' $84 million *Tomb Raider* production. It's an all-or-nothing risk. If the movie, starring Angelina Jolie, succeeds in capturing our imagination, Lara Croft gets reborn and reconnects with the gaming public. If it tanks, that could spell the end for Eidos' cute and curvy mascot.

Given that it's a major movie release, Paramount has been unusually tight-lipped about *Tomb Raider*, so it's virtually impossible to gauge which scenario is likely to play out. The studio did invite *CGW* to the set in London last September, and what we saw was nothing short of spectacular.

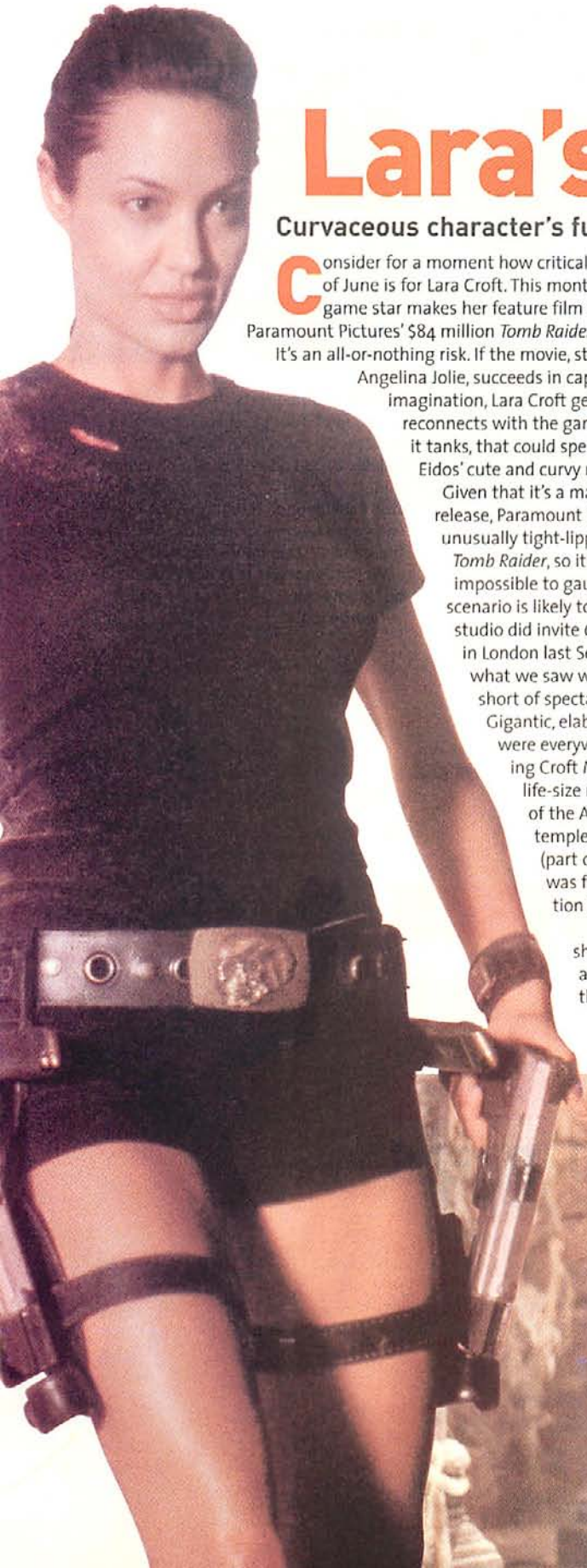
Gigantic, elaborate sets were everywhere, including Croft Manor and a life-size replication of the Angkor Wat temples in Cambodia (part of the movie was filmed on location in Cambodia).

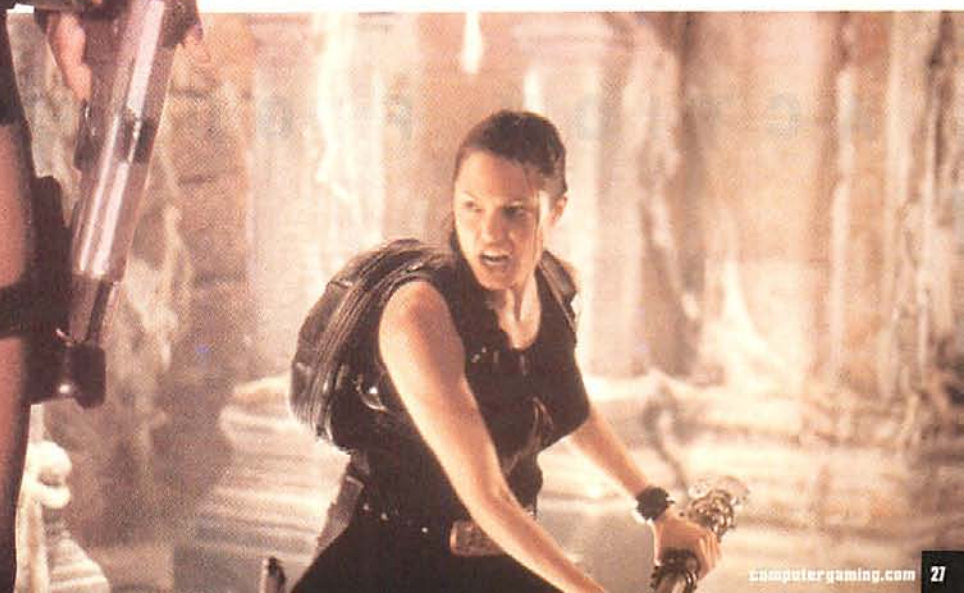
Still, you shouldn't expect a deeper story than those in the games. The plot serves merely as connective tissue between big, impressive action sequences involving giant robots, bungie-cord shootouts, and lots of special effects.



The big question remains: Can Angelina Jolie fit into Lara Croft's shoes without distorting gamers' impressions of the video-game star? Early indicators concerned us. When she signed on to the movie, Jolie made it clear that she wasn't wearing Lara's signature powder blue top. The *Girl, Interrupted* star, it seems, wears only blacks and grays.

But hey—that's how Hollywood adaptations work. Compromises are made and endings are rewritten. At least Lara Croft is still British. Besides, a change of wardrobe isn't such a bad thing. After five games in five years and a near fatal dose of overexposure, Lara Croft could use a little updating. —*George Jones*





Tom Hall's opus could be the sleeper hit of 2001

Exploring Anachronox





In at least one respect, ANACHRONOX harks back to the golden era of gaming, when visual quality had nothing to do with gameplay, presentation values, or fun. This innovative role-playing thriller compensates for its old-school, QUAKE II–powered look so well that we're tempted to think there may be an inverse relationship between graphics and gameplay.

Three years in the making, ANACHRONOX fuses science-fiction noir with fast-paced, open-ended FINAL FANTASY–style play. Two hours into the game, we were hooked by the story and writing quality. But the camera work adds so much to the experience that you'll wonder why such cinematic techniques haven't been used before. In one sequence, in which you're trying to break into an apartment, the game's camera angles create surprising tension. A shaky, pseudohandheld "confrontation cam" engenders both anxiety and hostility.

The gameplay incorporates the best elements of the adventure and role-playing genres. From the start, you have clear objectives and quests that lie within your grasp. You'll face plenty of interesting choices: Do you advise the bar patron to keep or sell his chunk of a precious mineral? Do you continue your quest or stop for weapons training? What effect will your statements and actions have on the game farther down the road?

We can't answer that now, but we plan on finding out.

—George Jones

ELITE ACTION FIGURES



Dolls are for girls. Unless they carry realistically modeled weapons and look like your favorite CT's from COUNTER-STRIKE.

These are the Elite Force dolls made by Blue Box toys, and they've practically spawned their own cottage industry of detailed, one-sixth scale military clothing and accessories. Each figure is modeled on members of real-world counterterrorist organizations—like the GSG9 German Border Patrol and British SAS guys pictured here—and should be very familiar to any COUNTER-STRIKE fan. The amount of detail and variety of materials used (metal helmets, canvas ammo bags) justify the $30 price tag.

You can find these guys storming a Malibu Barbie beach house near you, or online at **www.blueboxtoys.com**. *—Tom Price*

StarCraft Cinematic DVD

Can't get enough of the epic STARCRAFT saga? Now you can watch all the cinematics from STARCRAFT and the BROOD WARS expansion pack (or you could just play the games, you lazy bastard) by picking up Blizzard's limited-edition STARCRAFT Widescreen DVD Movie. Similar to the DVD that came with the DIABLO II Limited Edition, it lets you watch 36 minutes of goose-pimply STARCRAFT CG joy, as well as trailers for DIABLO II, the DIABLO II expansion set, and WARCRAFT III. Your life for Ayur? You betcha! *ETA: early July. $15 from www.blizzard.com.*



Arcanum Demo Fix



We apologize for a programming error that rendered last month's demo of ARCANUM unplayable. We've fixed the problem and will bring you the demo again in August. In the meantime, if you wish to play the demo on last month's disc, the fix is fairly simple.

1: Uninstall any previous installations of the ARCANUM demo.
2: Insert the June disc, and right-click on your CD drive. Select "Explore..." from the pop-up menu.
3: Copy the ARCANUM folder from the CD to your hard drive.
4: Open the ARCANUM folder. Now open the Sierra folder.
5: In /Arcanum/Sierra, find the Arcanum_Preview folder. Rename this folder Arcanum Preview.
6: Run Setup.exe from inside the ARCANUM folder. ARCANUM will now install properly.
7: Once the demo has installed, you can delete the ARCANUM folder.

On the Radar

Cate Archer Returns!

Fox Interactive has confirmed the sequel to last year's best action game, NO ONE LIVES FOREVER, to be published by Sierra Studios. Cate Archer will return to fight through another 60 levels featuring the same 1960s spy-film style as the first great game.

Microsoft Manhandles THE MATRIX...

Microsoft has locked up a six-month exclusive during which Shiny's THE MATRIX will be available only on Xbox. Shiny's publisher, Interplay, agreed to the terms in exchange for a $5 million loan from Microsoft. The deal stipulates that the game will feature online play only through Xbox, choreography by martial arts specialist Woo Ping, dialogue from the movie's actors, and special content that will be available only in the Xbox version.

...and Engulfs Ensemble

Microsoft has acquired Dallas-based Ensemble Studios, creator of the AGE OF EMPIRES games. The head of Microsoft's PC games division, Stuart Moulder, said that Ensemble will develop another AGE OF EMPIRES game. AGE OF EMPIRES III will be historically based, as opposed to Ensemble's AGE OF MYTHOLOGY (previewed last month), which includes fantasy elements. The setting for AGE III hasn't been decided, although Moulder said the age of discovery—with its sailing ships, conquest of new worlds, and plentiful men with rifles—is under consideration.

Free ICEWIND DALE Expansion

Black Isle Studios evidently felt like it gypped its customers with the ICEWIND DALE: HEART OF WINTER expansion. The developer is giving away a 75MB add-on with a new dungeon, more magic items, and even more monsters. It was scheduled to be out by the end of May.

Sid Meier's Master Stroke

Maxis and Firaxis have teamed up to bring us a joint design from gaming legends Will Wright and Sid Meier. The fruit of their collaboration? SID MEIER'S SIMGOLF. We've never gone from elation to deflation so quickly.

No details have been released, other than that the game will let you design, manage, and play your own golf resort. We're just dying to get a swing at this game.

Diablo II Goes High-Res

Blizzard's upcoming DIABLO II expansion, THE LORD OF DESTRUCTION, will finally upgrade the game to 800x600. After installing the expansion, users will be able to replay the entire game in the higher resolution, says Blizzard.

The expansion introduces a fifth act to the saga, in which the heroes finally confront Baal, the Lord of Destruction. It features two new classes, the Assassin and Druid, which can be used throughout the original game. The add-on also includes new items—such as new categories of items for each class, new monsters, and siege weapons. *ETA: scheduled to ship by the end of June.*



Special effects dazzle in *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*

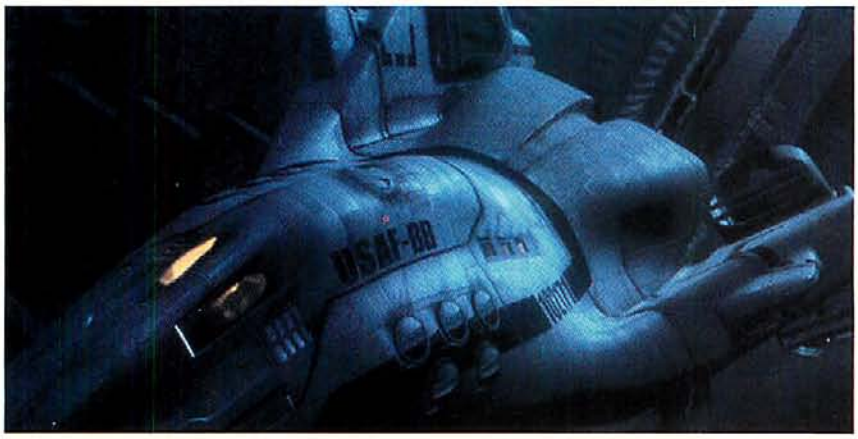
Graphic Wonder

With the premiere of *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* coming up July 13, Columbia Pictures recently treated lucky fans and media members to a preview of scenes from the animated movie. The producers amazed the audience with the four-years-in-the-making, $137 million technological marvel, whose visual fidelity easily exceeded the best computer graphics (CG) animation we'd ever seen.

The story bears some similarities to *Aliens*, with futuristic soldiers locked in a vicious struggle with a horde of alien invaders. The movie's heroine, Aki, leads the fight while trying to discover the secrets of an alien within her. The film features an impressive roster of voice talent, including Alec Baldwin, Donald Sutherland, Ving Rhames, Peri Gilpin, Ming-Na, Steve Buscemi, and others.









Square Pictures' 1,160-CPU rendering farm was custom built for the movie. It includes 960 933MHz Pentium III systems with 768MB of RAM each, plus 150 Silicon Graphics Origin 200 systems with 4GB of RAM each.



Prior to the screening, I was fortunate to visit the Square Pictures studio in Honolulu, where the majority of the film is being made. Specially built for the movie, the studio houses hundreds of talented CG artists recruited from around the world. The technology inside the studio is as impressive as the talent—the studio is filled with the latest Silicon Graphics computers and top-secret proprietary software.

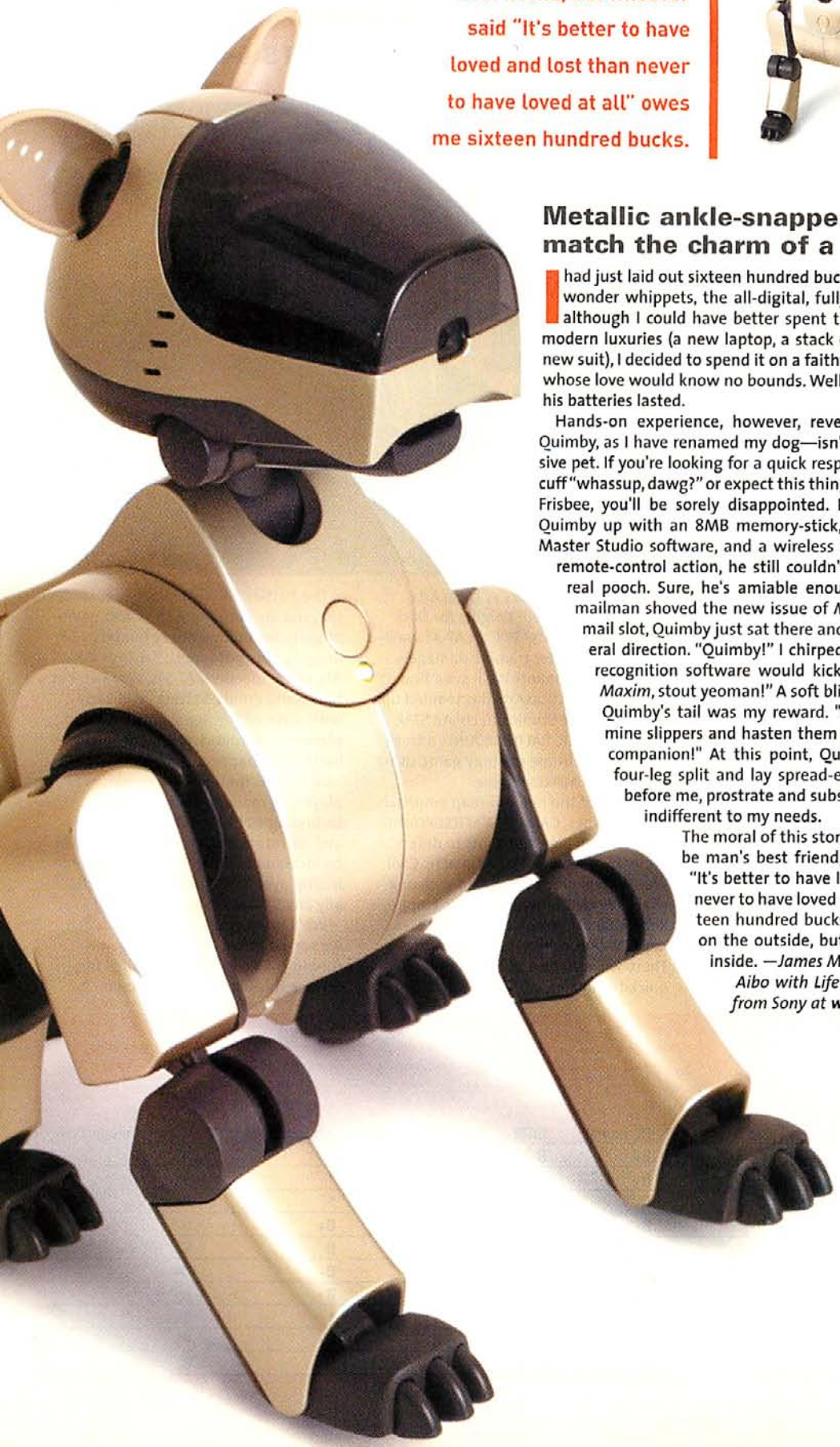
Square Pictures used an enormous motion-capture studio to create lifelike movements for the characters. Props such as firearms and armor were included to make sure the characters moved realistically with objects.

Then the studio artists meticulously overlaid facial gestures, finger movements, background, lighting, and other nitpicky details onto the motion-captured data. Much of the process is automated, but animators must still put in a tremendous amount of work to make the characters look realistic. Every pore and freckle is hand drawn—the main character's face took more than two months to complete. Even the hair—thought to be one of the most difficult things to create in CG—flows and moves beautifully, thanks to the 60,000 to 70,000 individually controlled strands of hair placed by the artists.



Completed scenes are fed through a collection of 960 computers called the rendering farm—a number crunching beast—that puts together all the information and creates individual frames of the movie. Each frame has twice the resolution of HDTV, and contains a whopping 10MB of data. At 24 frames per second, the entire flick takes up roughly 1,350 gigabytes of hard drive space. For more information, see **www.finalfantasy.com**. —*Nao Higo*

Life With A Robot Dog



The moral of this story is that a dog may be man's best friend, but whoever said "It's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all" owes me sixteen hundred bucks.



Metallic ankle-snapper can't match the charm of a real dog

I had just laid out sixteen hundred bucks for one of Sony's wonder whippets, the all-digital, fully robotic Aibo. Yes, although I could have better spent the dough on other modern luxuries (a new laptop, a stack o' DVDs, crack, or a new suit), I decided to spend it on a faithful new companion whose love would know no bounds. Well, at least as long as his batteries lasted.

Hands-on experience, however, reveals that Aibo—or Quimby, as I have renamed my dog—isn't the most responsive pet. If you're looking for a quick response to an off-the-cuff "whassup, dawg?" or expect this thing to catch a freakin' Frisbee, you'll be sorely disappointed. Even after I juiced Quimby up with an 8MB memory-stick, some swank new Master Studio software, and a wireless LAN card for some remote-control action, he still couldn't hold a bone to a real pooch. Sure, he's amiable enough, but when the mailman shoved the new issue of *Maxim* through the mail slot, Quimby just sat there and looked in my general direction. "Quimby!" I chirped, hoping his voice-recognition software would kick in, "Fetch me my *Maxim*, stout yeoman!" A soft blinking blue light on Quimby's tail was my reward. "Quimby! Grabbeth mine slippers and hasten them to me, oh stalwart companion!" At this point, Quimby performed a four-leg split and lay spread-eagled on the floor before me, prostrate and subservient, yet wholly indifferent to my needs.

The moral of this story is that a dog may be man's best friend, but whoever said "It's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all" owes me sixteen hundred bucks. I may be smiling on the outside, but I'm crying on the inside. —*James Mielke*

Aibo with Life software is $1,590 from Sony at ***www.aibo.com.***

THE CGW MIX
OUR FAVORITE DIVERSIONS

HALF-LIFE: BLUE SHIFT



How can we say no to a game so infused with the soul of the original HALF-LIFE, even if it is short? Plus, the graphics enhancement makes the old HALF-LIFE look pretty!

KOHAN: IMMORTAL SOVEREIGNS



Even if it wins the Silliest Game Name of the Month award, KOHAN remains on our play list for being an RTS that plays more like a turn-based strategy game. And it's damn fun to boot.

SPIDER-MAN (DREAMCAST)



Is there anything in the world cooler than Spider-Man? Answer: No. That's why many of us here are drooling all over our DreamCast SPIDER-MAN game—maybe the best superhero game ever. And guess what? Now it's coming to the PC. See our preview next month.

THE FIRST QUARTER BY STEVEN L. KENT



The First Quarter is an exhaustive history of console, arcade, and computer games. Packed with interesting stories and anecdotes from all the key players on any game you could think of, it's a fascinating book for the well-read gamer.

Age of Star Wars

Galactic armies collide in RTS using AGE OF EMPIRES engine



Can the designers at LucasArts substitute Jedi Knights for Dark Ages knights? Will an AT-AT walker produce greater trample damage than a war elephant? We'll soon find out, now that LucasArts has teamed up with Ensemble Studios to create STAR WARS: GALACTIC BATTLEGROUND, a free-wheeling real-time strategy game using the AGE OF EMPIRES engine.

Instead of the random-map emphasis of AOE games, GALACTIC BATTLEGROUND will focus on big campaigns to determine the outcome of the Galactic Civil War. Players pick a campaign with one of six key civilizations: Galactic Empire, Rebel Alliance, Wookiees, Gungans, Royal Naboo, or the Trade Federation. There will also be a skirmish mode for quick-fix junkies.

The battles will take place over land, sea, and air, with more than 200 types of units, including bounty hunters, Jedi Knights, storm troopers, X-wings, AT-ATs, snow speeders, AT-STs, Wookiee Kas tanks, and droids. Settings will vary, with some of the aerial battles taking place on asteroids while some ground battles will happen in submerged cities.

As in AOE, there will be resources for players to manage and upgradable technologies like Wookiee ingenuity and Jedi stamina. A scenario editor will be included to create custom single- or multiplayer battlegrounds with virtually any STAR WARS unit or setting.

We'll bring you a full preview when we can sit down and see the game running. It's currently scheduled for release this winter. —*Ken Brown*

REALITY CHECK

We've had a strong spring, game fans. The big standouts are BATTLE OF BRITAIN (which hopefully is injecting life back into the flight sim genre), CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING, and NASCAR RACING 4 (the Papyrus legacy lives on). The ratings for KINGDOM UNDER FIRE run the gamut, although the consensus on GameRankings.com was slightly on the favorable side. GameRankings.com, incidentally, averages the ratings from all the online reviews. The site offers a convenient way to compare each publication's take.

	CGW	PC Gamer	CGM	Gamespot	Adrenaline Vault	GameRankings.com
Battle of Britain	A	B+	B	A-	B+	A-
Blade of Darkness	B	B+	B+	B-	*	B
Clive Barker's Undying	B+	A-	B+	A-	*	A-
Icewind Dale: Heart of Winter	B-	B-	B+	C	B+	B-
Jagged Alliance 2: Unfinished Business	B-	C	B	B-	B	B-
Kingdom Under Fire	F	B	C-	C-	D-	C+
NASCAR Racing 4	A	A+	B+	B+	B+	A-
NBA Live 2001	B-	B-	B-	B+	*	B+
Oni	C	B	B	B-	B+	B+
SimCoaster	B+	B+	B	B	B	B

PIPELINE

Establishing software release dates is like trying to predict the next dot-com to crash and burn. These dates represent the best available information we had at press time. If you're a publisher, send your updates to: cgwletters@ziffdavis.com.

Updates

WARCRAFT III: By the time you read this, the Humans and the Orcs should be finished. Next up: the Night Elves and Undead, then play-balance all the units in multiplayer, then focus on single-player stuff. It's gonna be a while.

RED FACTION: The PS2 version is all done, so what's happening with the PC version? The team says it's going all-out with the graphics, and as a result has pushed the game back to fall.





ARCANUM: The game is pretty much done; the holdup is translating the voluminous dialogue for all of the international versions. Sierra wants a simultaneous release, which means we'll have to wait a while longer. In the meantime, play the demo on this month's CD.

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS: Artists are busy modeling, texturing, and animating the game's 175 critters, in addition to interfaces and spell effects. Designers are creating items and are refining the story line for the single-player games. BioWare has a bunch of very busy Canadians right now.



TONY HAWK PRO SKATER 3: The sequel to one of the best console games of all time will come out on a staggering six platforms: PS2, Xbox, PS1, Game Boy Advance, Game Boy Color, and of course, PC. New locations include Middleton, Rhode Island; Rio de Janeiro; Los Angeles; Canada; Tokyo; and Paris. Jackass fans will note that Bam Margera joins the cast of skaters.

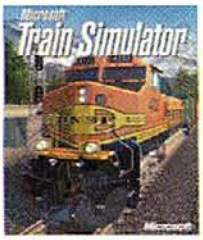


COMMAND & CONQUER: YURI'S REVENGE: Crazy Udo Kier is back in this upcoming expansion. In trying to hunt him down, gamers will play the single-player campaign as either the United States or Russia. In multiplayer, Yuri's own faction will be playable. With the likes of Viruses, Slave Miners, and Boomers on tap, YURI'S REVENGE will have more of those over-the-top units from RED ALERT 2.

NEW Age of Mythology Ensemble	Spring 2002
Age of Wonders II: The Wizard's Throne G.O.D.	Spring 2002
Aliens vs. Predator 2 Monolith	Winter 2001
Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare Infogrames	Summer 2001
Anachronox Eidos	July 2001
UPDATE Arcanum Sierra	September 2001
NEW Aquanox Fishtank Interactive	Fall 2001
Asheron's Call 2 Microsoft	Winter 2001
Baldur's Gate II: Throne of Bhaal Interplay	Fall 2001
Battle Isle: Darkspace Blue Byte	Summer 2001
Battle Realms Crave Entertainment	Summer 2001
Black Isle Studios' TORN Interplay	Winter 2001
Command & Conquer: Renegade Westwood	Summer 2001
UPDATE Commandos 2 Eidos	August 2001
Dark Sector Digital Extremes	Winter 2001
UPDATE Deus Ex 2 Eidos	Summer 2002
Diablo II: Lord of Destruction Blizzard	Summer 2001
Dragon's Lair 3D Blue Byte	Summer 2001
Duke Nukem Forever 3D Realms	Fall 2001
Dungeon Siege Microsoft	September 2001
Earth & Beyond Westwood	Winter 2001
Elder Scrolls: Morrowind Bethesda	Summer 2002
Empire Earth Sierra	Fall 2001
Emperor: Battle for Dune Westwood	Summer 2001
NEW EverQuest: Shadows of Luclin Verant	Fall 2001
Flight Simulator 2002 Microsoft	Fall 2001
Freedom Force Crave	Winter 2001
Galactic Commander Online 3000AD Inc.	Summer 2001
Global Operations Crave	Fall 2001
Halo Bungie	Spring 2002
NEW Heroes of Might & Magic IV 3DO	Fall 2001

UPDATE Independence War 2 Infogrames	Summer 2001
Majestic Electronic Arts	Summer 2001
Max Payne G.O.D.	Winter 2001
MechCommander 2 Microsoft	July 2001
Medal of Honor Allied Assault Electronic Arts	Fall 2001
Motor City Online Electronic Arts	Fall 2001
Neverwinter Nights Interplay	Winter 2001
O.R.B. Strategy First	July 2001
Operation Flashpoint Codemasters	Summer 2001
PlanetSide Verant	Fall 2001
Pool of Radiance II GAME Studios	June 2001
NEW Project Eden Eidos Interactive	Summer 2001
UPDATE Red Faction THQ	Fall 2001
Return to Wolfenstein Activision	Fall 2001
Sid Meier's Civilization III Hasbro	August 2001
Sigma: The Adventures of Rex Chance Microsoft	Fall 2001
UPDATE Simsville Electronic Arts	Summer 2001
Sovereign Sony Online Entertainment	Summer 2002
Star Trek: Borg Assimilator Activision	Winter 2001
Star Trek: Bridge Commander Activision	Summer 2001
Star Wars: Galactic Battleground LucasArts	Fall 2001
Star Wars: Galaxies Verant/LucasArts	Spring 2002
Stronghold G.O.D.	October 2001
Team Fortress 2 Sierra	Fall 2002
UPDATE Thief III Eidos	Summer 2002
Throne of Darkness Sierra	Summer 2001
Train Simulator Microsoft	Summer 2001
Unreal II Infogrames	Spring 2002
UPDATE WarCraft III Blizzard	Spring 2002
Warlords IV GAME Studios	Summer 2001
Zoo Tycoon Microsoft	Fall 2001

THIS MONTH'S TOP 5
PREORDERS



Train Simulator *(MICROSOFT)*
Play as engineer or passenger. This game delivers one of the most realistic experiences to date. Contains six routes and over 600 miles of rail that was recreated using extensive data on terrain and elevation. Trackside details are nearly identical to their real-life counterpart.



Diablo II Expansion: Lord of Destruction *(BLIZZARD)* You will face a new series of quests and challenges to prevent Baal, the last of the Prime Evils, and his vile minions from destroying the world of Sanctuary by corrupting the Worldstone, which protects the whole mortal plane from the forces of Hell.



Commandos 2 *(EIDOS)*
A tactical action-strategy game set against a World War II backdrop. Take control of an elite group of gritty soldiers who must venture deep into enemy territory and utilize their combined expertise to complete a series of mission-based objectives.

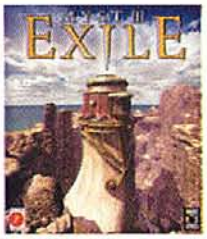


Baldur's Gate II Expansion Pack: Throne of Bhaal *(INTERPLAY)* Continue the epic saga of Baldur's Gate™ II to its ultimate conclusion as you fulfill your destiny as the child of Bhaal. Unravel the mysteries of Watcher's Keep, cast new high level spells and gain powerful new abilities.



Half-Life: Blue Shift *(SIERRA)*
In Take on the role of the Black Mesa security guard and explore restricted areas of the mysterious government facility. As security in this top-secret facility, you must scramble to keep the scientists and yourself alive, as you extinguish the many hostiles attempting to take you out.

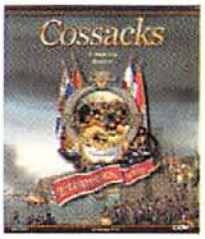
THIS MONTH'S TOP 5
RELEASES



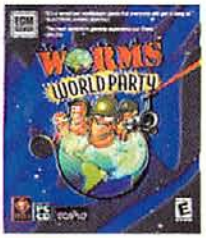
Myst III: Exile *(GAME STUDIOS)*
Building on the surreal style of Myst and Riven, Myst III: Exile features new fantastic environments that made its' predecessors immersive, mysterious and beautiful. Exile features five entirely new ages for players to explore and hours of new mysteries to uncover.



Black & White *(ELECTRONIC ARTS)* A role-playing game unlike any other you've played before. You play the role of a deity in a land where the surroundings are yours to shape and its people are yours to lord over. Your actions decide whether you create a heaven or hell for your worshippers.



Cossacks *(STRATEGY FIRST)*
A historical real-time strategy based on events of the 16th through the 18th centuries in Europe. You get to carry out lingering city sieges, wage guerrilla wars, capture commanding heights and arrange ambushes, deploy landing forces on enemy shores, and conduct sea battles.



Worms World Party *(TITUS)*
Get another fix of what is perhaps one of the most creative puzzle/strategy games ever created. Anyone that likes to think more than they twitch when playing will appreciate this latest entry into the series which is the most approachable version of the game to date.



Sims House Party *(MAXIS)* Toga party, anyone? This Expansion Pack makes it easier than ever for The Sims to make friends and quickly rise to the top. Party themes range from Wild West campfire cookouts to Hawaiian luaus and room-shaking raves, with plenty of objects provided to keep guests entertained.

All available now at the Computer & Video Games store at

amazon.com.

Get thousands of game titles at amazon.com/videogames

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TOP 20

The best in gaming, as voted by gamers



1 **Black & White (EA)** ★★★★★

An innovative game that people actually like? Leave it to Peter Molyneux to create something different that also sells. However, the tedium of the gameplay will most likely get to people in the long haul, making this game eventually slide in the charts.

2 **Diablo II (Blizzard)** ★★★★★

Don't expect this game to drop off the Top 20 until we boot it off at the ripe old age of two. See our DIABLO II expansion information on page 29.



3 **Unreal Tournament (Infogrames)** ★★★★★

It's a testament to UT that after 18 months, it still ranks higher than COUNTER-STRIKE. It's spawned a host of great mods–see a few of them on page 74.



4	Deus Ex (Eidos)	★★★★★
5	Baldur's Gate II (Interplay)	★★★★★
6	Half-Life: Counter-Strike (Sierra)	n/a
7	Age of Empires II: Age of Kings (Microsoft)	★★★★★
8	The Sims (EA)	★★★★★
9	Age of Empires II: The Conquerors (Microsoft)	★★★★★
10	Quake III Arena (Activision)	★★★★★
11	Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2 (EA)	★★★★★
12	Homeworld (Sierra)	★★★★★
13	Final Fantasy VII (Eidos)	★★★★★
14	No One Lives Forever (Fox)	★★★★★
15	Tribes 2 (Sierra)	★★★★★
16	Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri (Infogrames)	★★★★★
17	MechWarrior 4 (Microsoft)	★★★★★
18	Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear (UbiSoft)	★★★★★
19	System Shock 2 (EA)	★★★★★
20	Metal Gear Solid (Microsoft)	★★★★★

The *CGW* Top 20 is an online poll conducted in partnership with Gamespot. Anyone can vote, even Canadians: Point your browser to www.computergaming.com and pick 10 favorites. We print the 20 highest-scoring games.

The Top 20 is limited to games less than two years old. After two years, games become eligible for the *CGW* Hall of Fame.

Handy STATS

By Alex "Clown Suit" Handy

1
Number of last month's Handy Stats that were blatantly incorrect.

3
Number of years DAIKATANA was *actually* in development.

1
Number of irate emails Handy received from John Romero for saying that DAIKATANA took 4.3 years to develop.

1,400,000,000
Earnings, in dollars, from Electronic Arts' worldwide sales in 2000.

40
Percentage of computer gamers who are women. (Source: IDSA)

27
Percentage of console gamers who are women. (Source: IDSA)

15
Percentage chance that IDSA makes this stuff up.

48
Percentage of MYST players who are women. (Source: Linn PR)

10
Percentage of *CGW* editors who are women. (Source: Holly Fleming)

50
Percentage of *CGW* editors who scream like girls.

10
Percentage of *CGW* editors who throw like girls. (Source: Anyone who saw Jeff Green play softball)

1,387
Weight in pounds of Jon Brower Minnoch, world's heaviest man, in 1977. (He's dead now.)


EIDOS
INTERACTIVE
PC
CD
TEEN
T
Animated Violence
Animated Blood

FAMILY-STYLE DINING.

The godfather of gangster sims is back. In the tradition of prohibition-era mobsters, it's your job to keep your hit men, kidnappers and hoods in line so you can make a killing, so to speak.



Day and night are equally strategic so you can appear legit all day and save your dirty work for the wee hours.



The in-game advisor helps you move up the ranks from a fledgling hoodlum to a feared and respected made man.



Command a host of new specialist characters to build your team's criminal power and family connections.

Gangsters 2

It's Disturbingly Authentic

www.gangsters2.com

Gangsters 2 © 2001 Hothouse Creations Ltd. Published by Eidos Interactive Ltd. Eidos Interactive and the Eidos Interactive logo are registered trademarks of the Eidos group of companies. © 2001 Eidos Interactive. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. All rights reserved.



TOWER OF POWER Taking over and holding enemy facilities will advance the front lines as well as give players convenient respawning points closer to the action.

GENRE: Massively Multiplayer Shooter
RELEASE DATE: Summer 2002
PUBLISHER: Sony Online Entertainment
DEVELOPER: Sony Online Entertainment
CONTACT: www.station.sony.com

PlanetSide

Is this the future of online shooters?

by Robert Coffey

Is the world ready for a more real QUAKE? For a multiplayer shooter without players bouncing around like hopped-up jackalopes? For a game in which victory takes teamwork, success is measured in ways other than the total number of kills, and the scale of conflict isn't you versus a handful of other guys but you and a few thousand versus another few thousand? This is the challenge facing Sony Online (*aka* Verant Interactive, purveyor of the digital methadone known as EVERQUEST) and its massively multiplayer shooter, PLANETSIDE.

Virtual Life and Death

From now until well into 2002, the online world is going to be a war zone. With dozens of massively multiplayer persistent-world games aiming to consume your bandwidth, logic dictates that only a handful will succeed, given the huge time investment these games demand—not to mention the monthly subscription fees. The inevitable competition should be as much cold war as dogfight, with companies simply trying to outlast competitors and when the losers close up shop, grab their fan base. For want of a compelling hook, many games will fall by the wayside (see "So Who's Going to Win Online?" on page 39).

This is why PLANETSIDE seems to have so much going for it. It breaks the mold yet stays within it, delivering pulse-pounding FPS action while retaining the RPG-centric reward system that persistent game universes thrive on. It is a gamble—Sony is basically building a game that gamers don't know they want yet.

The easy parts of the equation are obvious, and they are already in place. Even with release a year off, PLANETSIDE is right on the leading edge graphically, with incredibly detailed worlds, landscapes, and objects. The muscle-bound game engine is remarkable, rendering sprawling continents loaded with landscape features and providing load-free transitions to the intricate interiors of the buildings, which will be a crucial part of the objective-based gameplay.

While the demo we looked at didn't have all the weapons implemented, those we saw were impressive, packing a satisfying punch and punching a powerful hole. The ballistic- and rocket-based arsenal eschews more fantastic weapons like lasers and death beams—and this sense of realism informs gameplay as a whole, despite PLANETSIDE's futuristic trappings. Real people can't leap the way they do in QUAKE and UNREAL TOURNAMENT, so you can't either in PLANETSIDE, and the harsh reality of recoil means your aiming reticule is

War! What Is It Good For?

Mission-based gameplay between the warring factions of PLANETSIDE forms the game's foundation, but one design decision led to a spirited debate during our visit to Sony Online: If the war never ends, what's the point? The PLANETSIDE team feels that the satisfaction will come from completing increasingly difficult mission goals. That's great, but if the war will be manipulated so that no faction ever *wins* the overall conflict, isn't it all moot?

To be fair, *CGW* was evenly split regarding this philosophical question. Does a game like WORLD WAR II ONLINE have an edge because one side can prevail, or is it flawed because the conflict is reset when one side wins? In a team game like baseball, would players be satisfied to never have a final score?

We can't wait for the PLANETSIDE beta to see if we're absorbed, or if we feel like we're just spinning our wheels.



DRIVE BY Much like the late, lamented PC version of HALO, PLANETSIDE will let multiple team members (above) use the same vehicle. While any player can run outside their home city limits to find a quick and easy deathmatch, PLANETSIDE's biggest rewards will be reserved for outfits like this that work together toward common goals.

appropriately jarred when you fire your weapon. While gamers weaned on QUAKE-style deathmatches will have some adjusting to do, the end result is a style of combat that is grittier and tenser than what you'll find in an online arena packed with rocket-jumping rail-gunners.

But that's not what makes PLANETSIDE more than a TRIBES 2 mod. That's not why people will feel compelled to play.

That Which Does Not Kill You Makes You Stronger

What will hook players, what's going to make or break PLANETSIDE, will be the rewards and the big-picture style of play. In order to rise above the blood-soaked online arenas of every other shooter, PLANETSIDE pays its players to participate.

Experience gained through play will result not only in money that can be used to purchase new weapons and armor (items that enterprising players will also be able to scavenge from the dead) but also in implants that upgrade your avatar's abilities. Interestingly, none of these implants will augment your combat abilities—the designers want to keep the game balanced by letting reflexes and true skill determine your combat effectiveness. Rather, implants will upgrade other vital skills, such as your ability to heal others, repair weaponry, operate various vehicles, hack enemy facility systems, and more.

Sony will allow players only one character per server, in hopes of increasing the emotional investment in your avatar (as well as to prevent gamers from creating shadow characters to act as spies). The designers also plan to let players purchase and develop property, but we're not totally sold on this as a Great Design Idea since it doesn't seem to affect actual gameplay.

And how will you acquire the experience to gain these boons? Not by simply racking up the largest body count (though kills will garner some experience). Instead, PLANETSIDE will give the biggest rewards to players who accomplish specific mission goals. Successfully protect a convoy, and you get experience. Manage to seize control of an enemy structure, thus advancing the front line of the conflict, and you get experience.

Tying the big experience payoffs to these larger goals works for the game in a couple of ways. First, it encourages players to band together as registered, organized Outfits (read: clans) or loose groups of players temporarily collaborating to complete a job. Second, it breathes life into the game fiction of three warring factions by constantly pitting the factions against one another, routinely assigning rival outfits to opposing sides of the same mission. But the conflict does come with one very interesting design conundrum (see "War! What Is It Good For?" on page 38).

There's no questioning Sony's ability to deliver a compelling online game—the company has proved itself a hundred times over with EVERQUEST. And with a year left to perfect PLANETSIDE, odds are that Sony is hard at work at another winner. CGW



GUN CLUB Note the ballistic nature of this player's weapon. PLANETSIDE's arsenal will forgo energy in favor of more realistic guns. A scarcity of proximity weapons will require players to be precise and earn their kills.

So Who's Going to Win Online?

We know there's no such thing as a sure thing, but we're betting the following games will be the ones left standing after the coming persistent-world online war.

EVERQUEST 2—There's been no official announcement of this game, but if ever a sequel were a given, this is the case. With an already rabid fan base, we don't see how this one can miss.

ANARCHY ONLINE—This very cool sci-fi RPG has learned a few ease-of-use lessons from EVERQUEST and seems a likely candidate to appeal to gamers looking for an alternative or complement to EQ's classic fantasy trappings.

SIMS ONLINE—Why a bartender in Topeka would want to play an online version of himself and deal with all the daily minutiae he's supposedly escaping from escapes us. But we've learned not to argue with the whole SIMS phenomenon and just accept the fact that it's unstoppable.

EARTH & BEYOND—With the future of DIGITAL ANVIL and FREELANCER looking increasingly unsteady, Westwood's deep-space RPG is looking more and more like a winner. The spaceship combat focus of this game should give it tremendous appeal—unless STAR WARS GALAXIES trumps it by letting gamers pilot their own Millennium Falcons.

SHADOWBANE—If any game has a chance at beating EVERQUEST in the classic fantasy realm online, it's this one. Expect SHADOWBANE to make its move sometime between the latest EQ expansion and the inevitable EVERQUEST 2.

STAR WARS GALAXIES—Recent *Star Wars*–related games haven't exactly set the world on fire, but giving gamers the opportunity to become Darth Steve from Poughkeepsie is basically a license to print money. That's good because rumor has it that George Lucas has been spotted eating out of dumpsters.



GENRE: Real-time strategy
RELEASE DATE: Summer 2001
PUBLISHER: Sierra Online
DEVELOPER: Stainless Steel Studios
CONTACT: www.sierra.com

LAND, SEA, AND AIR In multiplayer games, teammates can divide responsibilities so that each controls a different attack force.

Empire Earth

From caveman to spaceman in a real-time civ game

by Ken Brown and Jeff Green

EMPIRE EARTH is nothing if not ambitious. Imagine playing a game of AGE OF EMPIRES that didn't stop in the Iron Age, but kept on going through the Renaissance, Industrial Age, Modern Age, and into the future, with mechanized warfare, ICBMs, satellite weapons, and advanced fighters operating from aircraft carriers. How tough would your siege weapons and war elephants be then?

Of course, it's one thing to undertake the monumental task of creating all those 3D units and letting people play out their fantasy battles. It's another thing to see if the game can still be playable when close-range weaponry gives way to nuclear missiles and plasma cannons. AGE OF EMPIRES succeeded in part because it focused on melee combat; can a game that starts out with brawling cavemen remain cohesive when death rains down from the other side of the map? After taking a good look at the game recently, we're starting to think that, yeah, it just might.

Age of Civilization

The similarities between EMPIRE EARTH and AGE OF EMPIRES are no coincidence. The lead designer of AGE OF EMPIRES, Rick Goodman, left Ensemble Studios in 1998 to found Stainless Steel Studios and begin developing EMPIRE EARTH. He says he left Ensemble to work on the game he'd always wanted to play, a "kind of a real-time CIVILIZATION. More than just conquest, it's a grand empire-building game in realtime."

"Grand" is a good word for it. EMPIRE EARTH spans 500,000 years, divided up into 12 epochs, beginning with the Paleolithic age and ending in the "Nano Age," around 2,200 AD. The single-player campaigns will take you across these epochs, through the entire breadth of human history (and beyond), as experienced from the vantage point of specific civilizations.

For example, early on, you'll play as the Greeks—and around 1200 BC you'll find yourself in the heart of the Trojan War, mounting a full-scale siege on



SNIPER ATTACK You can use the 3D terrain to your advantage by picking off enemy troops from above.

At a Glance	
AOE II	EMPIRE EARTH
4 Ages	12 Epochs
450–1,450 AD	500,000 BC to 2,200 AD
60 units	200 units
12 civs	Customizable civs
12 unique units	24+ heroes
2D	3D
Daytime	Day/night cycles, seasons



SIEGE ME EMPIRE EARTH is a fully 3D game, requiring a 3D card, but the gameplay will be as easy to manage as that of AOE or STARCRAFT.

the city of Troy. Midgame, during the peak of Western imperialism, you'll play as the English. In one scenario described to us, you'll recreate the Battle of Poitiers (in 1356) against the French, in which Prince Edward ("The Black Prince") sails to France with a small force of troops and ultimately captures France's king. In the 20th century, campaign scenarios will put you in the role of the Germans during WWI and WWII. The final, futuristic epochs have you fighting from the vantage point of the Russians.

Players can choose from 12 preset civilizations, or craft their own from 100 different attributes. Researching new technologies yields different results depending on your civ. Says Goodman, "It's as if you took all the unit attributes from AGE II, and let people pick the civ strengths they want: military units, villagers, economics, etc." An adjustable point system underlies the setup, which allows player handicapping: You can take 100 points to make your civ, and give your newbie opponent 500 points for theirs.

Conquest vs. Economics

One of Goodman's biggest goals with EMPIRE EARTH was to build a game that would appeal to both battle-loving conqueror-type players and more peaceable empire-builders—while giving both types ample, feasible opportunities to win. As such, the game offers numerous victory conditions, such as converting units, amassing wealth, committing acts of espionage, and building wonders.

But if conquest is what you're after, you'll still find plenty to sink your onager (an ancient stone-propelling siege engine; who knew?) into. You'll find almost every major military unit here, from spearmen to superfortresses and beyond. There are dozens of units familiar to AGE fans, as well as new units like siege towers which let you scale enemy walls. Later units include battleships, mortars, fighters, bombers, flamethrowers, anti-aircraft units, tanks, submarines, laser weapons, and mechanized walkers.

All the units have upgradable attributes (attack strength, hit points, armor, etc.) and have various states of aggression that can be changed for each situation. To keep unit building manageable, you won't be able to build units that are more than two epochs old. Older units will stick around, though, until you decommission them or use them for cannon fodder.



FRENCH TOAST After the clubs and spears, and before the planes and Mechs, you'll find yourself engaged in classic 18th-century warfare.

Heroes will make an interesting addition to the unit list. Goodman says he received a lot of requests from AGE players who wanted to play with historical heroes from different ages. Heroes won't come cheap, but they'll confer special bonuses on their armies, such as increased speed or accuracy. Some heroes such as Queen Elizabeth will only generate economic bonuses, while others like Alexander the Great will have extra armor and lead their troops. Rommel will have a large area affect on his army and less impact on individual units. And don't be surprised, later in the game, to see a hero named Elvis with the hip-shaking power to convert.

Take the High Ground

EMPIRE EARTH is a fully 3D game—and while you won't be able to rotate the camera (an almost certainly wise decision, to keep gameplay as accessible as AOE), the 3D will have other functions. For example, units in higher elevations of the 3D terrain do extra damage to units below. If you're on a hill overlooking a river, you'll do double damage to any units in range that



MEET THE FLINTSTONES EMPIRE EARTH begins in the Paleolithic Era with grunting cavemen. Stick around for, say, 500,000 years, and those cavemen will get replaced by Mechs.



TANKS AGAIN Welcome to World War II. All military units are upgradable, so you can improve stats like weapon range, hit points, and armor.



NO THIS ISN'T MECHCOMMANDER By the end of the game, EMPIRE EARTH moves from historical simulation to science-fiction.

attempt to cross.

If you're on the receiving end of an arse-whooping and running low on resources, you won't necessarily be doomed. EMPIRE EARTH rips a page from SIMCITY's playbook to give you an alternative: calamities. Prophets will have the ability to cast powerful calamities on your enemies, such as plagues, fires, floods, and earthquakes—all of which can kill enough people to neutralize a civilization or satisfy a victory condition. Calamities may also be the means by which you can threaten a civ that's got the bomb.

Fortunately, there are also counters to calamities: special buildings in close proximity to the people you want to protect. Government centers protect you from human-made calamities like revolts; temples make you immune to acts of God like floods and earthquakes; and hospitals make you immune to disease. Without a hospital, disease will spread from one unit to another like crabs at Daytona Beach.

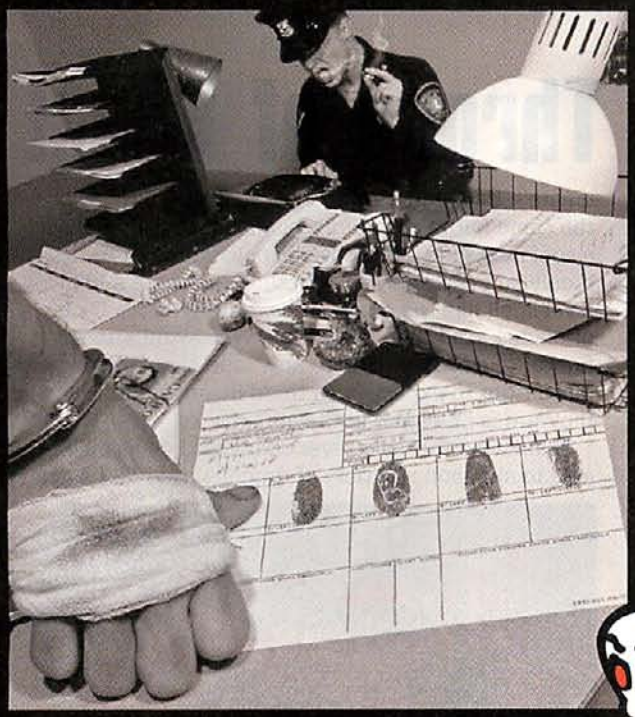
In addition to the single-player campaigns and random maps, EMPIRE EARTH will have several multiplayer options, including deathmatch, cooperative, and team play. Goodman wants to provide a team-play option where, for example, three people can control different aspects of one civ, battling against other teams. One person each could control air, land, and sea to help share responsibilities. Another player could control the villagers, building, and resources.

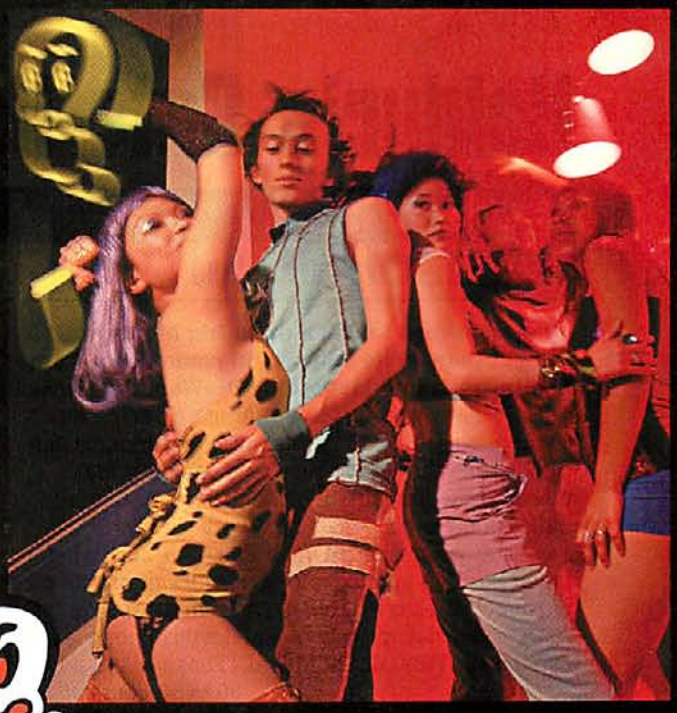
"I'm really hoping that co-op play will replace team play," says Goodman. "In team play if a partner gets killed, you don't care. But in co-op play, you want to make sure that your partner isn't eliminated." You'll have the option of starting and ending in any epoch, so multiplayer games don't have to take half of your weekend.

Researching...

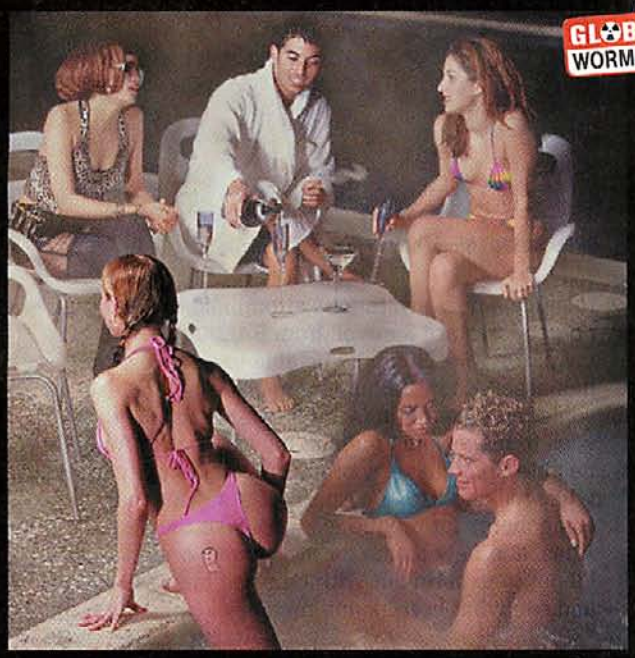
With such an incredibly ambitious design, EMPIRE EARTH's biggest challenge will be to keep the game balanced and cohesive throughout. These last few months of development have involved huge rounds of playtesting with some of the best AOE and STARCRAFT players from around the world, so hopefully by the time they're done banging on it, the kinks will be out and the execution will match Goodman's ambition. If it does, look for EMPIRE EARTH to be a world-class empire-builder. CGW

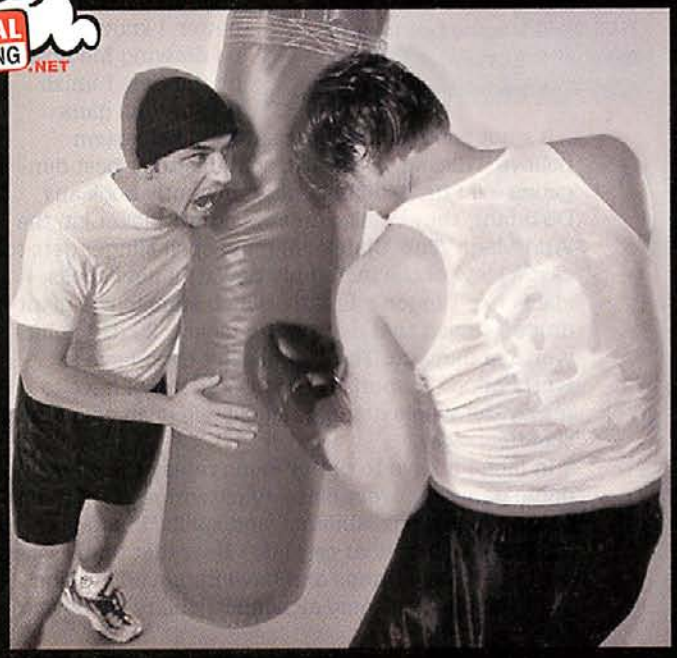
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Animated Violence
Mild Language

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Baldur's Gate II: Throne of Bhaal

by Robert Coffey

Me to BioWare—drop dead

Sometimes I wish a great big Monty Python–style foot would come down from heaven and just stomp BioWare flat. I mean, really, what the hell is it with these guys? They come to our office, they're all nice and friendly, but by the time they leave they've completely and utterly ruined my life. It's like they're putting a bullet in my brain—only very, very slowly.

Look at what they've done this time. Just when I finish burning up a couple of decades of my life compulsively playing BALDUR'S GATE II: SHADOWS OF AMN, these deceptively genial devils announce an expansion, THRONE OF BHAAL. They say it'll add 30 to 50 hours of gameplay, but I know better. I know I will be drawing Medicare by the time I finish this friggin' game.

GENRE: RPG • RELEASE DATE: Q4 01
PUBLISHER: Interplay Entertainment
DEVELOPER: BioWare
CONTACT: www.interplay.com

It's not enough that the chittering hellspawn believe THRONE OF BHAAL contains their best dungeons ever (in itself enough to instantly hook any D&D fan); they've also created a new player kit, the Wild Mage. This Chaotic-aligned spell-slinger gets to cast a slew of the incredibly powerful new spells—spells like Dragon's Breath, which summons a giant dragon's head that deals out a measly 20 d10 points worth of damage. The guy doesn't even have to worry about memorizing spells—so now I have to replay the whole damn game just so I can enjoy this cool new class.

In fact, I'll have to pretty much replay the whole damn game for every class, what with each of them getting new skills, abilities, and spells. I hate playing thieves, but what can I do? Now that thieves can set time-delayed traps and have improved evasion skills, along with some alchemical ability, I'll have to create a thief and play all over again. I'll have to do the same with the straight mage, since mages have a cool new randomized wish spell, and with clerics, if only so I can enjoy the dazzling effects of a high-level spell like the enemy-dicing glory that is Globe of Blades. And then there's the Whirlwind attack for fighter types. This is more new stuff than any gamer has a right to expect—can there be any doubt that BioWare is in league with Satan?

Thank God that whatever character I choose I'll be able to summon a variety of dragons. And I'll be able to enjoy a new mysterious stronghold and add that no-good bastard Sarevok from BALDUR'S GATE I to my party. And I'll finally be able to get rid of that half-assed Know Alignment spell and memorize something useful (in fact, I'll be able to erase any spell to make some room in my spellbook). And I'll be able to ratchet any of my characters up to level 40 while making use of a bunch of new weapons, new components for unique weapons like the Flail of Ages, and new ammo for my ranged weapons. And I'll get to experiment with Lum the Mad's machine and see what horrors and miracles I can create. And finally, after spending the better part of, oh, about 57 years playing all these BALDUR'S GATE games, the epic Child of Bhaal story line will be brought to a (hopefully) thunderous conclusion.



SPELLBOUND Storm of Vengeance—it really hurts.

And I'll have to play through this repeatedly in a hurry—NEVERWINTER NIGHTS ships at the end of the year.

Damn you, BioWare. Damn your cold black heart. CGW





IT'S ALL GOOD With 70 new areas, including a new keep; more than 40 new spells and abilities; and great spell animations like this, THRONE OF BHAAL just doesn't play fair.

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GENRE: Strategy • RELEASE DATE: Q2 01
PUBLISHER: EA/Dreamtime Interactive
DEVELOPER: The Creative Assembly
CONTACT: www.eagames.ea.com

Shogun: Warlord Edition

by Alan Dykes

New enhanced version lets you invade Japan as Kublai Khan

An impressive new version of SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR will let would-be imperial warlords exercise their territorial ambitions in several new ways. The WARLORD EDITION is a stand-alone game that introduces new units, new campaigns, improved graphics, and significant changes to the game's campaign structure.

WE offers four new story-based historical campaigns, three of which follow the fates of Japanese warlords who achieved temporary control of the country in the 16th and 17th centuries. The fourth campaign focuses on Kublai Khan's attempted invasion of Japan in the 13th century.

The Mongols were defeated when they landed on Japanese soil, and although they assembled a larger invasion force to try again, it was wiped out by a typhoon. (The gale became known as the "kamikaze"—the divine wind that saved Japan from invasion.) In this campaign, you have the opportunity to succeed where the Great Khan failed by conquering all of Japan.

If you play the invasion campaign, the strategic element of the game changes considerably—there is very little building work and no training of troops. It is based on conquest alone: The more territory you capture, the greater your pillage—which is sent back to the continent in return for fresh recruits.

The Mongols introduce several new troop types, including heavy cavalry and mounted archer units that are much more powerful than their Japanese counterparts. Several Korean infantry units are also introduced, including Thunderbombers, who carry porcelain grenades packed with gunpowder. New Japanese units include crossbowmen, mounted naginata practitioners, and battlefield ninja.

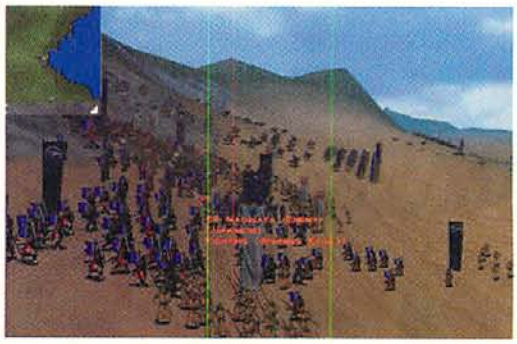
WE also changes the original campaign structure, shortening the time it takes to build dojos and changing the value ratios for various buildings and troops. By doing this the developers hope to make the tech tree more accessible. It also permits the campaigns to be started from a selection of preset advance points, allowing for shorter, more intense games. Multiplayer map games are also possible, using client-based Internet servers or a LAN setup. A very welcome change to the strategy map is the ability to preroute units through a number of territories, simplifying movement.

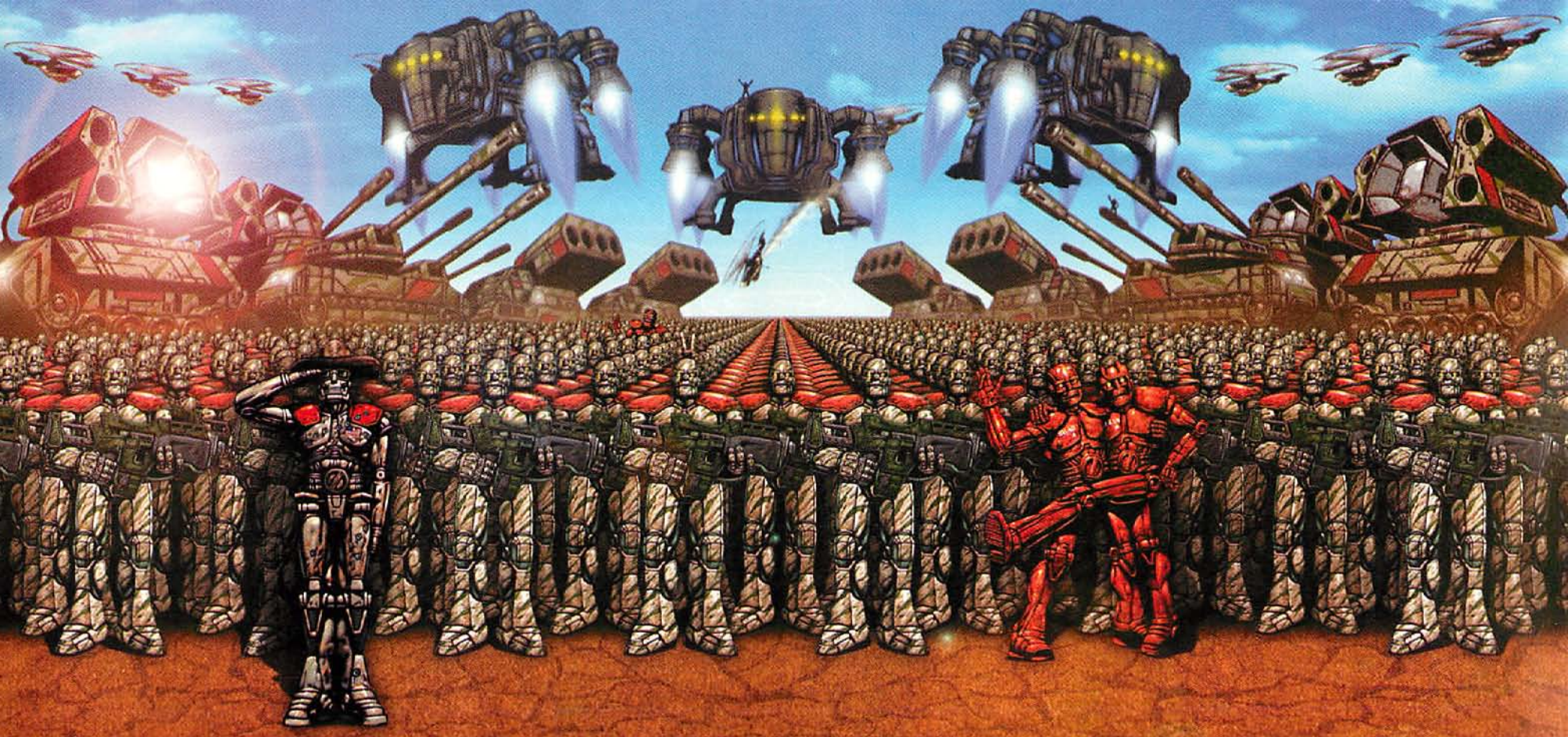


SHARPER IMAGE SHOGUN's tactical battle scenes will look even better with the enhancements in the WARLORD EDITION.

Graphics enhancement should result in better-looking units and battlefield terrain. Unit pathing has also been modified to make bridge and castle battles run more smoothly.

With all these changes, WE should add enough new wrinkles to drag you back into the saddle. CGW





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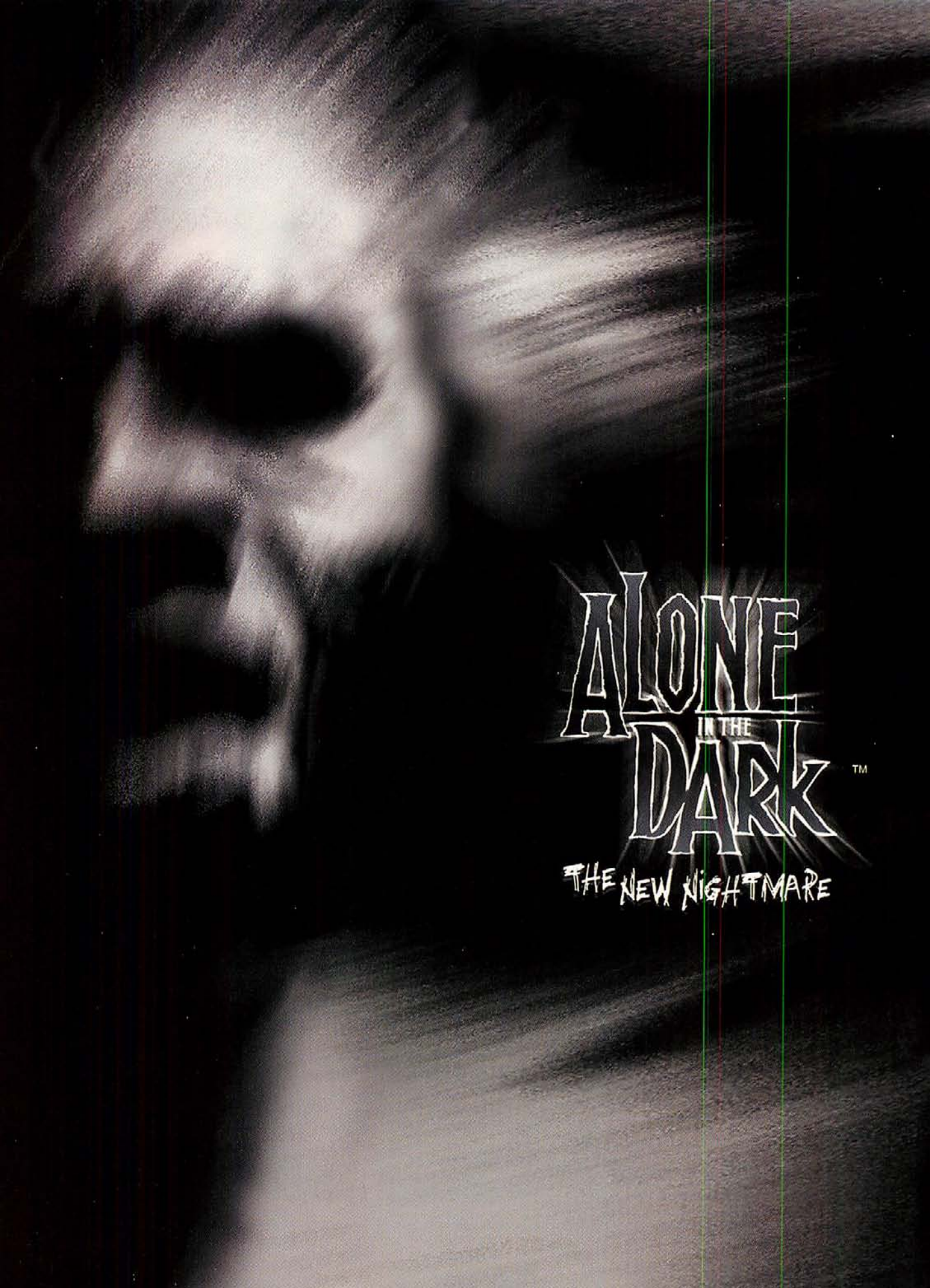
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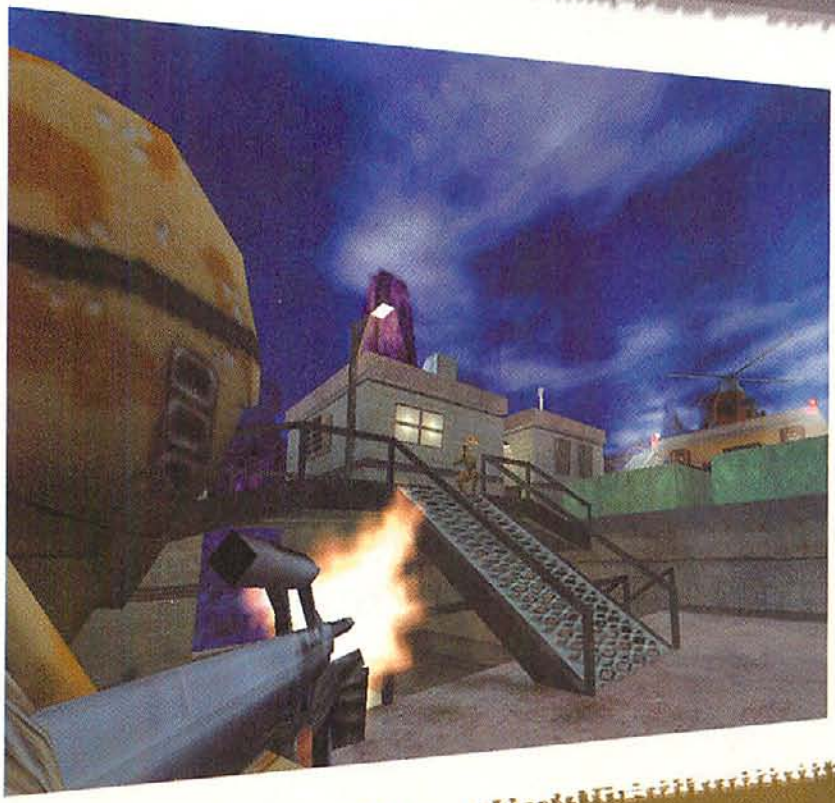
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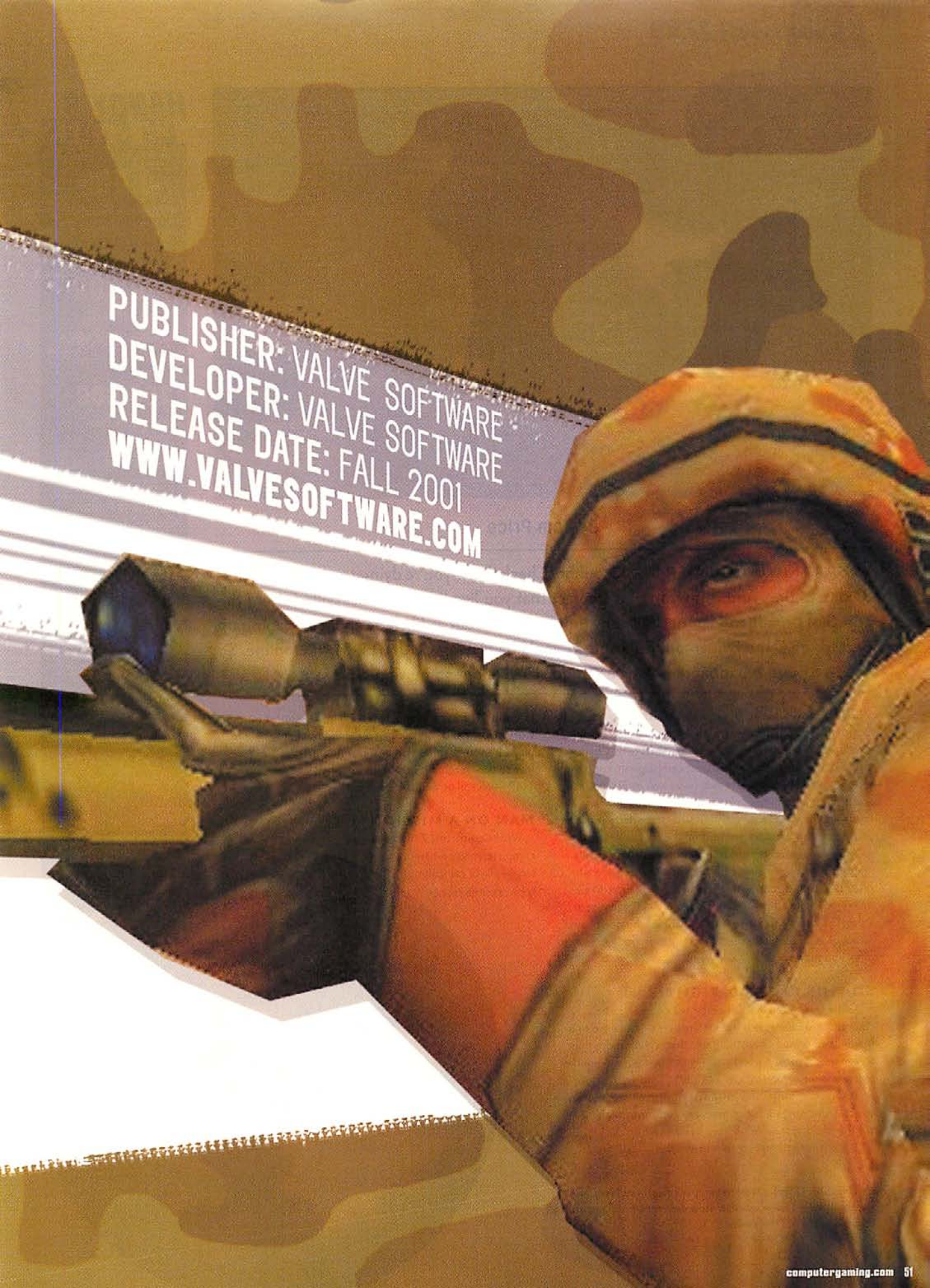
Screenshots are from PlayStation game.

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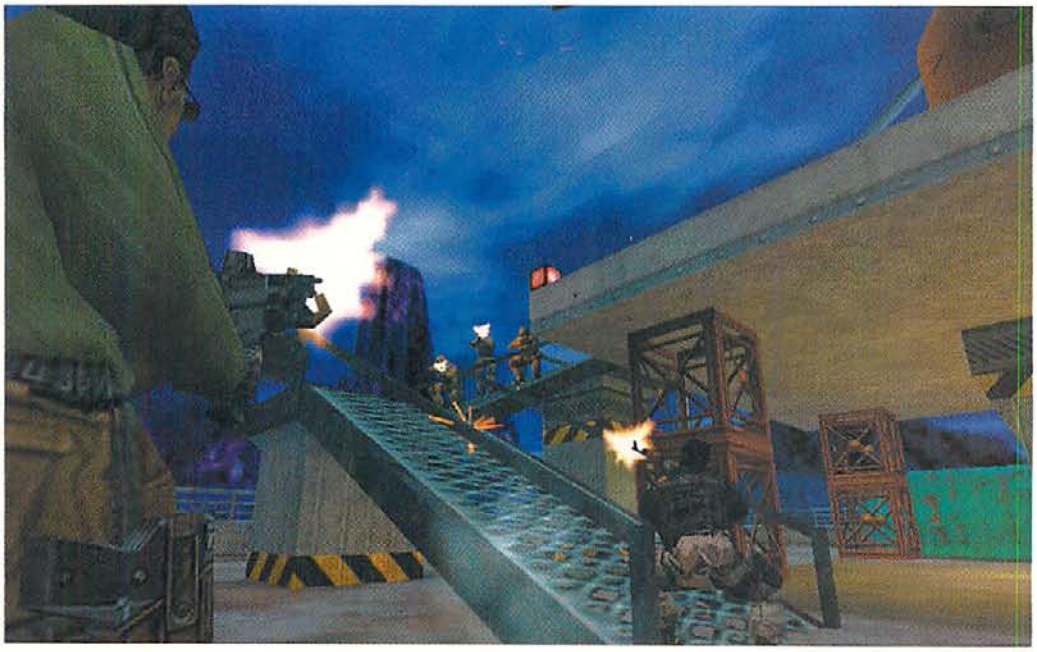
ARMY OF ONE



VALVE'S **COUNTER-STRIKE UPDATE** BRINGS **SINGLE-PLAYER ACTION** TO THE MOST POPULAR SHOOTER ONLINE


PUBLISHER: VALVE SOFTWARE
DEVELOPER: VALVE SOFTWARE
RELEASE DATE: FALL 2001
WWW.VALVESOFTWARE.COM

CONDITION ZERO



By Tom Price

You want to play COUNTER-STRIKE online. Check that—you're dying to play COUNTER-STRIKE online. And if it wasn't for the fact that you live in Outer Sticksville (where the arrival of broadband connectivity any time soon is about as likely as an Ikea opening up next to the Dairy Queen out on Route 5), you'd be playing COUNTER-STRIKE online. So what's a poor, broadbandless schlep to do? How about some single-player?

That's exactly what you'll get with COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO, the new stand-alone expansion being developed in-house by Valve Software. At its core, CONDITION ZERO is a robust single-player campaign utilizing the existing, modded HALF-LIFE engine as well as HALF-LIFE's superb AI programming, plus a slew of new weapons and toys and a new Spetznaz counterterrorist model. I know you're quivering, but try not to drop the magazine.

Valve—with involvement from CS creator Minh Le—is intent on creating "a single-player game that captures the grit, realism, and cooperative play of the COUNTER-STRIKE online experience," says Erik Johnson, project manager at Valve. The overall objective is to let people who don't have an adequate Internet connection enjoy everything CS has to offer, and more.

SO THIS IS CS 2.0, RIGHT?

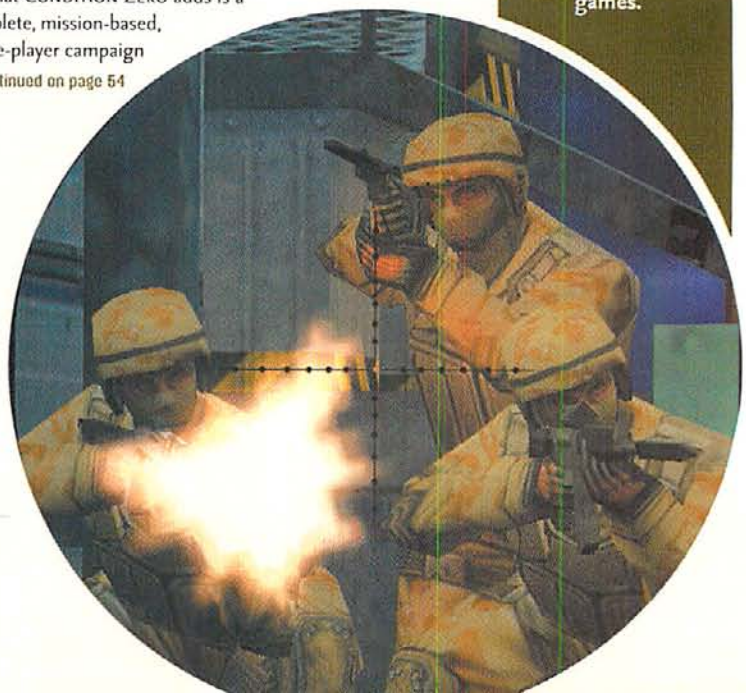
Before I get into what CONDITION ZERO is, let's be very clear about what it is not. It's not COUNTER-STRIKE 2.0 or a full-fledged sequel or anything like that. Yet it's more than an expansion pack. A good analogy can be found in another Sierra franchise: CONDITION ZERO is to COUNTER-STRIKE what CATACLYSM was to HOMEWORLD. The engine remains basically unchanged, but gamers are getting something worthwhile that they didn't have before.

"We are not attempting to reinvent the wheel," says Johnson. "The key CS ingredients will be kept intact in CONDITION ZERO." So don't worry about not being able to play with your favorite skin or weapon. Whatever gun you love to use—even if it's that hummingbird of death the TMP—will still be available to you.

MAN ON A MISSION

What CONDITION ZERO adds is a complete, mission-based, single-player campaign

>> continued on page 54



IN THE SIGHTS of a terrorist sniper rifle, three Navy SEALS are about to get their spankin'-new desert camouflage uni's all covered in blood. Their own.

HANDY'S CS STATS

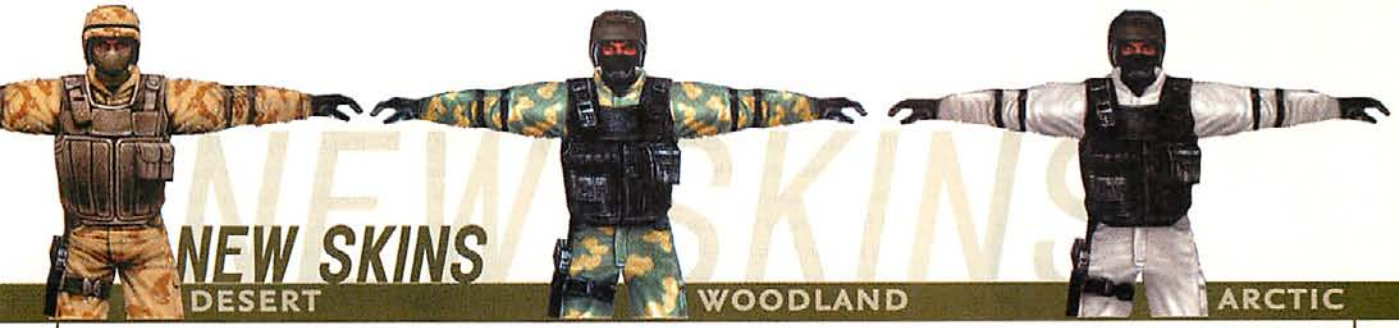
8,000
Current average number of active CS servers online.

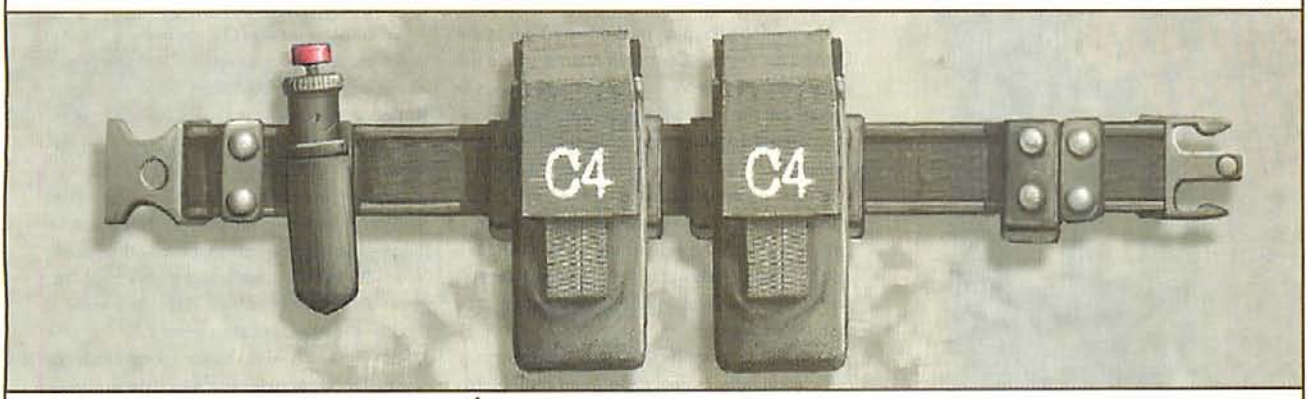
40,000
Current average number of active CS players online.

250,000+
Number of retail versions of COUNTER-STRIKE sold since it was released in November 2000. (Note: It has shipped only in the United States, Canada, and Germany so far.)

2.5 million
Number of HALF-LIFE copies sold worldwide.

Over 50%
of people who purchased HALF-LIFE have tried at least one of its online games.





He Who Dies With the Most Toys Wasted His Money

So what new toys of mass destruction will you be able to play with in CONDITION ZERO? Here's a quick look at the weapons and equipment that will be available to you. (CT) means it's a counterterrorist-only item (although of course, anyone can pick up any gun that's been dropped on the ground); (T) means it's terrorist-only; and (both) means it's available to both sides (duh).

PANCOR JACKHAMMER (BOTH): If you think the Bernelli auto-shotgun currently in CS is a devastator, wait until you get a load of the Jackhammer: a 12-round-per-second, bullpup-style automatic shotgun. As Raphael Liberatore says, it's "Fun, fun, fun, but a friggin' bitch to clean!"

"BOUNCING BETTY" LAND MINES (T): The telltale click lets you know when you've stepped on one of these. Take another step and you're red mist. Wait until a buddy with a Universal Tool shows up, and you'll both go home safe.

.357 MAGNUM (BOTH): Everyone's favorite high-powered revolver from HALF-LIFE is making a comeback. Now there's a cheaper hand cannon than the Desert Eagle.

SUICIDE BELT (T)

Good terrorists should be committed to their cause to the point of self-sacrifice. That's exactly what the wearer of this snappy little number will be doing when he runs blindly into the middle of your team and pushes the button. Of course, you could shoot him down before he gets too close, but if he arms the belt before he dies, a countdown will begin and you'll need to defuse the belt or take cover. You won't see this one in the Armani line for fall.

M-60 (CT)



The M249 (also known as the SAW or Para) was the only heavy machine gun in the game, but not any more. Now there's also Rambo's favorite from-the-hipper, the M-60. It enjoys power and ammo capacity similar to the Para, but with a faster firing rate. CGW weapons specialist Raphael Liberatore calls it a "reliable workhorse of a machine gun."

M-79 GRENADE LAUNCHER (CT)



The appropriately monikered "Thumper" has been around since the Vietnam War. It's perfect for those hard-to-reach places that snipers like to hide in.

AUTO-CROSSBOW (T): Just when you got that maddening "thunk" sound from multiplayer HALF-LIFE out of your head, it's back, but a bit different. This terrorist weapon silently fires poison-tipped bolts that will slowly drain the health of a target as well as make him jerk around randomly. Try to snipe me now, punk.

CONCUSSION GRENADES (BOTH): As opposed to flashbangs that blind people, concussion grenades give everyone nearby a bad case of tinnitus. A well-placed concussion round will drive someone backward and make him drop his weapon. Again, try to snipe me now, punk.

FLARES (BOTH): Every map has that one dark corner with a camping newbie ready to ruin your round. Now you can just pop a flare and brighten up his (and your) day.

BINOCULARS (BOTH): Sure, you could use these for bird watching or spying on the CT's in the shower, but you'd just get capped in the meantime—so scan wisely.

UNIVERSAL TOOL (CT): It defuses, it unlocks, it disarms, it slices, it dices. But you can't buy one of these at The Sharper Image (only at a spawn point near you).

>> continued from page 52

that's built around the various COUNTER-STRIKE gameplay modes (hostage rescue, bomb defusal, VIP assassination, and so on) and presented as a series of international incidents. Playing as whichever counterterrorist organization—be it the familiar Navy SEALS or British SAS, or the new Russian Spetznaz—is assigned to the case, you'll be charged with the same kinds of tasks you've grown familiar with in multiplayer COUNTER-STRIKE.

The 16 globe-hopping missions start out at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, where the terrorists are trying to steal some nasty viruses to unleash on the unsuspecting public. Playing as a counterterrorist, you're sent in to stop them. If you succeed, you can move on to the next mission. Your other option is to play the level through again, this time as the terrorist, whose goal is to snatch the viruses and make a run for it to the escape helicopter. Every level will let you play both sides, which in effect gives you 32 unique missions.

As of this writing, the CDC level is nearing completion, with its cool clean-room setting providing a deceptively placid prelude to the frantic, dangerous escape route to the rooftop helicopter. Some of the other levels on the drawing board include:

- A World Cup game in Spain—Don't let those terrorists start a stampede!
- The Louvre—Let's see what an MP5 does to the Mona Lisa.
- The Chunnel—Someone's been watching Mission Impossible.
- A Russian Typhoon-class sub—Try not to shoot the nuclear missile silos, mmkay?
- Hong Kong's Kowloon bay—You gotta have a Hong Kong mission.
- Devil's Island—Who let the terrorists out? Who? Who? Who?
- NORAD—It's probably a good idea to keep the bad guys away from "the button."

All of these levels will be available as multiplayer maps as well, for people who buy CONDITION ZERO and for those who already own CS and play it online.

WAR BUDDIES

Of course, you won't be completing these missions alone. Valve is designing "a single-player game with a multiplayer feel," as Johnson puts it. Unless the company is able to include cooperative play, which is at the top of its wish-list right now, much of CONDITION ZERO's success will be riding on the bot AI of your teammates. When you consider how good the grunts in HALF-LIFE were—the way they covered each other, used grenades to clear rooms, and always used the protective cover of objects in their environment—the AI prognosis is good.

But you won't have the same kind of control over your squadmates that you have in UNREAL TOURNAMENT. The actions of the bots will be largely scripted; in other words, they'll have orders to follow, such as taking a certain point on the map, laying down cover fire, or escorting the VIP. You'll have orders too, and the missions are designed so that you'll need to effectively carry out those specific orders to "pass." The different assignments you receive should run the gamut of CS experiences: Defuse/plant the bomb, escort/assassinate the VIP, snipe the other team/take out the other team's sniper, and so on. By the time you've successfully finished CONDITION ZERO, you should have experienced a wide range of combat-oriented tasks.

WHO ARE THESE GUYS?



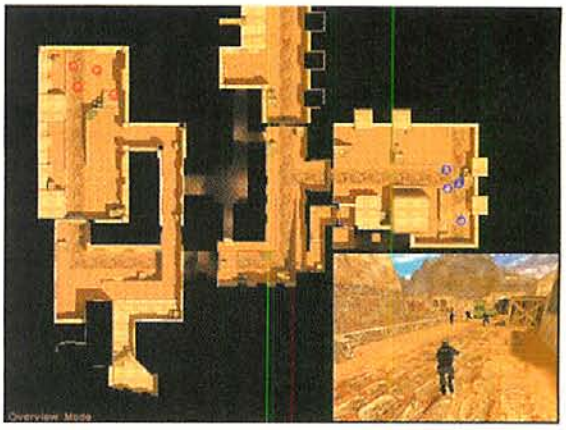
The new counterterrorists on the block could be mistaken for the bad guys if it weren't for the uniforms.

Spetznaz, short for Spetsialnoye nazranie (translation: troops of special purpose) are Russian special forces known for their win-at-all-costs attitude and less than kosher methods. Spetznaz have been an integral part of the Russian armed forces since the Cold War, and continue to operate to this day. Technically, they're the good guys, but based on the way they conduct themselves, that "good" label is a little sketchy. The Spetznaz have definitely gotten their hands dirty before, as one anecdote (possibly apocryphal) shows:

The Spetznaz were called into a hostage situation, created by a group of politically motivated terrorists, after negotiations had broken down. Instead of infiltrating the building and stealthily rescuing the hostages, the Spetznaz snuck in and captured a couple of terrorists. Once they had them outside they demanded that the terrorists tell their comrades inside to give up. When the captive terrorists refused, the Spetznaz beheaded one and threw his visage back into the building with a note that read: "Surrender, or we'll come in and do this to the rest of you." Yeah, these are the guys you want on your side.

Gamewise, an example of Spetznaz in action would be a mission in which the single objective is to "kill everything that isn't you with extreme prejudice."

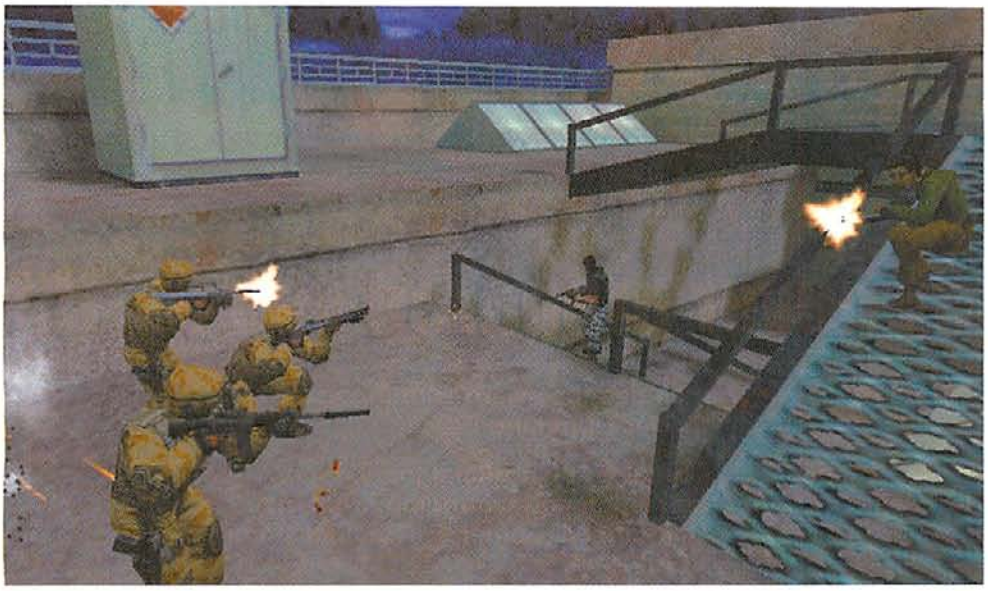
We Like to Watch



One of the big enhancements that Valve is making to the HALF-LIFE engine should make its popular multiplayer mods–including COUNTER-STRIKE, TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC, and others–even more enjoyable to watch as well as play. It's a new spectator mode designed to give spectators, especially at tournaments like the CPL, a whole new way to watch a match in progress.

What this new multicast technology does is take a snapshot of the entire level's layout from an isometric viewpoint. Competitors are then represented not by their player model but by an icon that signals what team they're on and what direction they are facing. So you can see well before it happens when two players are about to turn a corner and surprise each other.

The big advantage is, an unlimited number of people can spectate from any computer anywhere. This is obviously huge for tournament play, but the feature could also be used on a smaller scale if, say, some well-known gamers (oh I don't know, the editors of rival game magazines?) were online playing, and people from all over could tune in to see someone they know get used like a wet mop. On second thought...



◀ NO EASY EXIT for the terrorists who have just raided the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. Those Navy SEALS aren't about to let them board a helicopter with enough smallpox to wipe out the U.S. Eastern Seaboard. In this, the first mission of CONDITION ZERO, this will be the counterterrorists' charge: Stop the terrorists (and save the world while you're at it).

RADIO SILENCE

Although the basic COUNTER-STRIKE engine will remain unchanged, Valve is making a few tweaks and adjustments that should be welcomed by experienced CS gamers as well as newbies.

The biggest new feature actually isn't COUNTER-STRIKE specific. CONDITION ZERO will be the first HALF-LIFE–related retail release to ship with voice over IP technology, a feature that will eventually be included in updates to all HALF-LIFE mods and products.

You'll be able to communicate with your teammates by actually speaking to them, rather than by using the hot-keyed canned messages (although more of these are planned). This could be a really amazing accent to team-based gameplay, especially in CS, where team coordination is always one of the keys to victory. I just worry about the chatter getting to be too much. Thankfully, the server-side package will allow the admin to control who can and cannot talk, and who can and cannot listen. Valve is also toying with the idea of assigning one player on each team to be squad leader; that person would be able to talk and give orders at all times, as well as decide which team members would have the same privileges. Expect to see this technology in CS as well as in TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC and other mods sometime this summer.

Another feature, currently used by CS players who are savvy enough to create and use scripts, will be the ability to create favorites lists for buying weapons, à la TRIBES. So instead of hitting the "B" key, clicking on SMGs, then clicking on MP5, hitting "B" again, clicking on Equipment, yada yada yada, you'll hit one key and bada-bing, you get your gun, armor, and ammo all at once. Ask anyone who's been killed while still shopping, and they'll agree that this should really level the playing field for the first few seconds of any multiplayer game. Valve will put in some default "buy" lists to suit everyone from the pistol packer on a budget to the money-is-no-object full outfitter. Of course, you'll be able to tailor these to your own needs.

A feature that should please the more boastful CS players will be the medal icons. On the leaderboard, each team will have an icon next to the name of the person with the most kills per round as well as the one who's made the most headshots. Each player name will also have an icon for the weapon they're using the most. This info will be updated in real time and should provide for some entertaining insights. Remember to look out for the guy with the suicide belt next to his name.

POP QUIZ, HOTSHOT: HOW'S IT GONNA BE?

Only time will tell how good CONDITION ZERO will be. It all depends on the quality of the maps and missions Valve creates, and on how well the HALF-LIFE AI holds up. But we trust the creators of the greatest action game of all time to make CONDITION ZERO a must-have for old-school COUNTER-STRIKE fans as well as—and maybe especially for—those gamers who haven't experienced it online. Of course, cooperative play becoming a reality would be a huge bonus. Good luck guys. I'll be camping—er, waiting. CGW

COUNTER-STRIKE HISTORY

FALL 1999

CS Beta 1 released as a free mod (modification) for HALF-LIFE.

WINTER 2000

CS team partners with Valve.

SPRING 2000

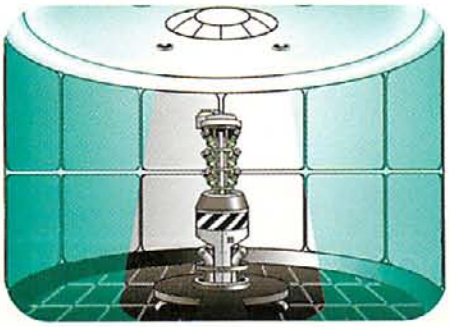
CS, now at Beta 7, becomes the number-one online action game. Productivity in offices with broadband connections sinks to a new low.

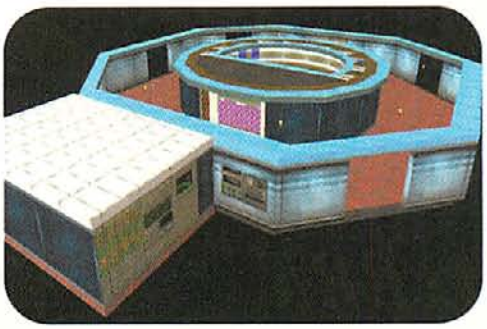
FALL 2000

CS 1.0 is completed, and released as a stand-alone commercial product.

WINTER 2001

CS 1.1 patch is released. It adds new maps, enhances player skins, and finally tones down that goddamn AWM sniper rifle.





◀ THE SECRETS OF LEVEL DESIGN are no secret to the level gurus at Valve. These are the people who brought you SURFACE TENSION, after all. Here's a look at the first level of the game, the CDC in Atlanta, from an early concept shot to an actual in-editor screen. And yes, that disease containment unit was inspired by the poison-gas orb clusters in The Rock.

HALF BLUE

The Academy never prepared you for this..

- Uncover new information about the events of Black Mesa
- Update your existing Half-Life weapons and characters with the HD Pack
- 32-Person Multiplayer with Capture the Flag and other online games
- Includes the award-winning action thriller Opposing Force
- Contains the artificial intelligence, animation and technology that made Half-Life PC Gamer's "Greatest Game of All Time."



MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Violence

SIERRA™

gearbox software

VALVE

© 1998-2001 Sierra On-Line, Inc. or Valve L.L.C. All Rights Reserved. Half-Life, Opposing Force, and Blue Shift are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Valve, L.L.C. Sierra and the "S" logo are trademarks of Sierra On-Line, Inc. Gearbox and the Gearbox logo are trademarks of Gearbox Software, L.L.C. Half-Life was awarded Game of the Year by numerous publications from 11/98 - 9/99.

-LIFE®
SHIFT™



http://blueshift.sierra.com
www.valvesoftware.com

Available this June
Half-Life NOT required


Mental illness can make you feel this alone.
You're not. Get help. www.nostigma.org

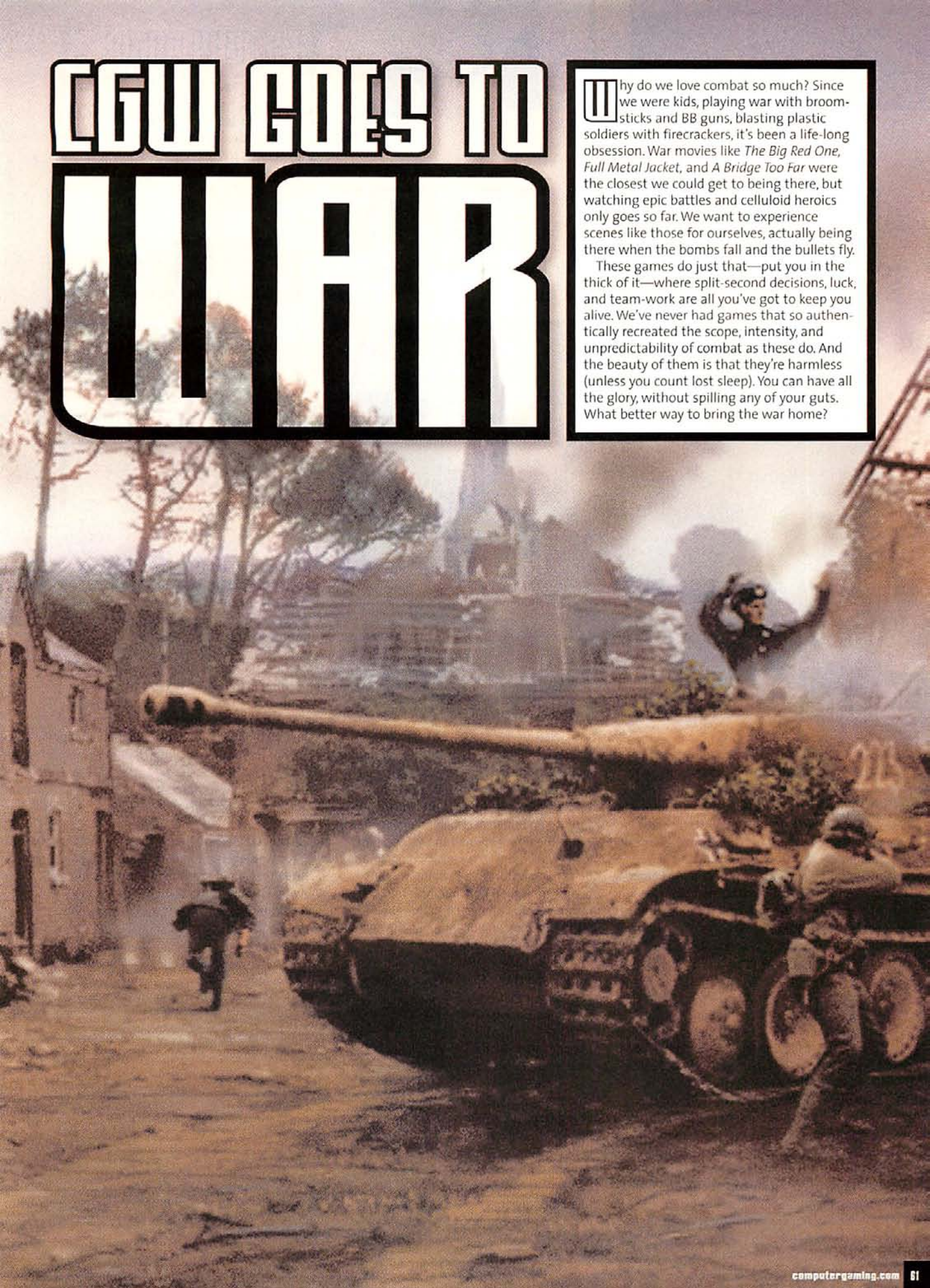


 Medal of Honor illustration by Mike Hall

CGW GOES TO WAR

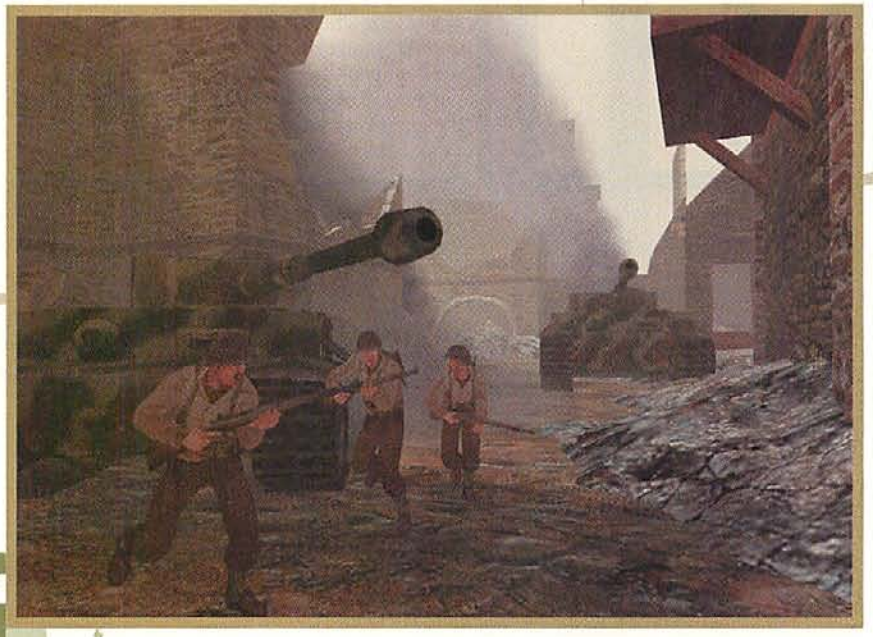
Why do we love combat so much? Since we were kids, playing war with broomsticks and BB guns, blasting plastic soldiers with firecrackers, it's been a life-long obsession. War movies like *The Big Red One*, *Full Metal Jacket*, and *A Bridge Too Far* were the closest we could get to being there, but watching epic battles and celluloid heroics only goes so far. We want to experience scenes like those for ourselves, actually being there when the bombs fall and the bullets fly.

These games do just that—put you in the thick of it—where split-second decisions, luck, and team-work are all you've got to keep you alive. We've never had games that so authentically recreated the scope, intensity, and unpredictability of combat as these do. And the beauty of them is that they're harmless (unless you count lost sleep). You can have all the glory, without spilling any of your guts. What better way to bring the war home?



MEDAL OF HONOR

Making the world safer, one dead Nazi at a time



While you can't directly control this squad, it will follow your lead and fight with you to provide cover for these Allied tanks.

STICKY BOMB

As dramatic as the sock, grease, and grenade combo was in *Saving Private Ryan* (and probably will be in MOH), sticky bombs weren't used much in World War II. There's no record of sticky bombs ever having been used in combat. British Grenade No. 74--a glass flask filled with nitroglycerin and coated with adhesive--was used primarily by partisans during the war. Why did the military pass on it? It had only a five-second fuse, and the bomb's adhesive made it more likely to stick to uniforms than to tanks.

The tide of a battle, of an entire war, can shift upon the actions of a single man. Uniquely possessed of clarity in the face of chaos, singularly able to act without hesitation and give themselves utterly, selflessly to the cause at hand, these men can defy seemingly insurmountable odds to seize victory where only crushing defeat seemed possible. These men are called heroes, and Electronic Arts wants you to become one. In MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT you'll get the chance to see if you've got the stuff to join the ranks of the gallant few.

The Cost of Freedom

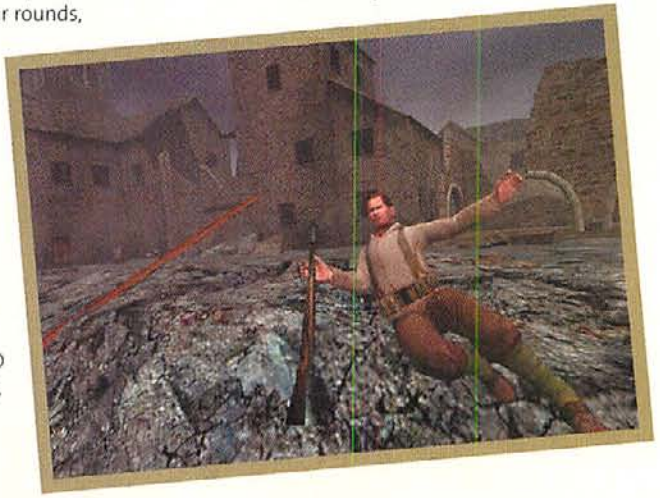
ALLIED ASSAULT takes place during the most storied time of heroes in U.S. history: World War II. Playing as Lt. Mike Powell of the 1st Ranger Battalion, you're recruited by the Office of Strategic Services to battle through a series of objective-focused missions based on actual battles. Much of the action in this first-person shooter will undoubtedly call to mind classic war films like *The Guns of Navarone* and *A Bridge Too Far*. Your career will span the European theater of operations: You'll assault gun emplacements in North Africa, try to survive the deadly hedgerows of Normandy, dodge snipers in the foggy rubble of a bombed-out French village, battle to secure the bridge at Remagen, and don a German uniform to go undercover behind enemy lines.

But the unquestioned showstopper of MOH will be the D day invasion of Omaha Beach. You'll start in a bobbing Higgins boat, surrounded by other infantry. The ramp will drop and you'll charge the beach amid the whistling of shrapnel, the deafening explosions of mortar rounds, and the chaotic shouts and cries of your fellow soldiers.

Despite the real-life carnage of the subject matter, MOH will be an essentially bloodless game. EA is shooting for a Teen rating from the ESRB. It's a pretty tall order considering that the definitive depiction of D day, *Saving Private Ryan*, relied heavily on a graphic representation of the true, bloody cost of war. Still, we're optimistic that it'll work in MOH for a couple of reasons: The MEDAL OF HONOR franchise on the Playstation has a solid history of grippingly moody gameplay courtesy of its sound; and with the unbearably spooky UNDYING, released earlier this year, EA proved that it understood the impact and execution of effective ambient sound.

Band of Brothers

No war is fought alone, and MOH recognizes that. To that end, you'll be able to work with other GI's to fight the enemy. Four different types of stationary weapons will be usable by





The game's destructible environment means you'll be dodging bullets from strafing planes amid a growing pile of rubble.



More than 1,000 model animations will let both Allied and Axis characters express fear, anger, and more.



You'll need an eagle eye and a steady hand to take out enemy snipers. Fortunately, the game is being designed so that you'll find the equipment you need (like a sniper rifle) whenever the situation calls for it.

players, including artillery and machine guns mounted on tanks. You'll be able to control heavy artillery and machine gun nests only as part of a squad: As the members of your team die off, you'll fire at a slower and slower rate until you are finally forced to stop and move on since no man can operate a howitzer alone.

While you won't be able to give other soldiers explicit commands, you will come across units that will follow you and fight with you for a time. The designers are working overtime on AI (a good thing since MOH uses the gorgeous but not too bright QUAKE III engine) to craft squads that will intelligently seek cover, follow your lead, and work as a real unit.

Your enemies will possess the same intelligence: They will seek cover, hunt you down by following the sounds you make, duck behind rubble, and kick grenades back at you. Specially scripted events will add even more drama and tension, as Stuka dive-bombers swoop in to attack, and enemy tanks roll up on your position.

To defeat such crafty adversaries you'll rely upon a huge, realistic arsenal including such real-life weaponry as Thompson submachine guns, Springfield .03 Sniper rifles, Mark II frag grenades, M1 Garand rifles, and, the true star of *Saving Private Ryan*, sticky bombs that you'll have to run up and slap onto enemy Panthers and Tiger tanks. As if all that weren't enough, the multiplayer options will allow you to harness the deadliest weapon of all—other people—as you fight through the game in co-op mode.

If Electronic Arts can even come close to delivering what it's promising, ALLIED ASSAULT could be a contender for Action Game of the Year. The company's great track record with the MEDAL OF HONOR franchise may be the crucial factor in the game's execution. We'll let you know if they're still in the running after we see D day at E3. —*Robert Coffey*

Medal of Honor Winner, Audie Murphy

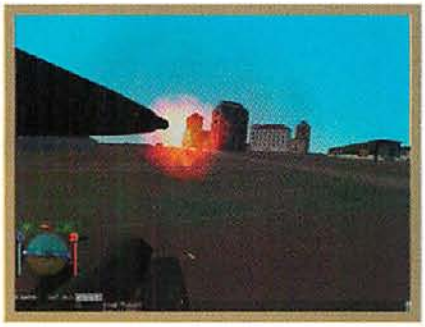


Audie Murphy was the most decorated soldier in U.S. history. He is credited with having killed 240 enemy soldiers—a nearly impossible feat for an infantryman—and that doesn't include the many he captured or wounded. Murphy's citation reads, "[On January 26, 1945, near Holtzwihr, France] six tanks and waves of infantry attacked 2nd Lt. Murphy's unit. Murphy ordered his men to withdraw while he remained forward to give fire directions to the artillery by telephone. With the enemy tanks abreast of his position, Murphy climbed on a burning tank destroyer (in danger of blowing up at any moment) and used its .50 caliber machine gun against the enemy. Alone and exposed to German fire from three sides, he courageously fought on, slaying dozens of Germans. The enemy tanks, losing infantry support, began to fall back. For an hour the Germans tried every available weapon to eliminate Murphy, but he held his position and wiped out a squad that was trying to creep up on his flank. Germans came as close as 10 yards, only to be mowed down by his fire. Murphy ignored a leg wound and fought until his ammo ran out. He then made his way to his company, refused medical attention, and organized a counterattack which forced the Germans to withdraw. His directing of artillery fire wiped out many of the enemy; he killed or wounded about 50."

For more on America's war heroes, see the MOH website at www.cmohs.org/.

WORLD WAR II ONLINE

Epic struggles and brutal realities on the virtual battlefield





A Spitfire makes a strafing run on a panzer.

It was the greatest conflict in the history of the world, with hundreds of thousands of combatants desperately trying to annihilate each other, but we've never been able to experience it for ourselves. Until now.

WORLD WAR II ONLINE will be the first persistent online simulation that lets you experience the war in a variety of roles, from either the Allied or the Axis side. You can be a British, French, or German soldier, tanker, or aviator. (Later on, you'll be able to join the navy, too.) The scope of the game is enormous—it models the entire Earth at one-half scale, the greatest amount of terrain ever created for an online game. By modeling the globe, the developers can open up other theaters eventually. They plan to re-create 10 theaters in all, including India-Burma-China, Africa, and Russia.

This marks the first real implementation (for consumers) of the electronic battlefield, where all aspects of a war are brought together with equal attention. Combine that with a first-person perspective and overriding emphasis on realism, and you've got a recipe for the ultimate re-enactment of the Big One.

But there's a big catch. How will the game's creators keep the experience "real" when up to 10,000 combatants all log into a theater at once? If you've ever seen a COUNTER-STRIKE game descend into 20 guys all doing their own thing, you can appreciate how tough it's going to be to encourage several hundred players to fight together. In the spirit of good design, Cornered Rat Software turned to history for the answer: rank and promotions.

You start out as a low-ranking soldier. You can participate in missions that have been planned for days, or just pop in to the closest battle to fight for a few minutes. Once you've entered a theater, you'll see a map showing the current front. By clicking on a city that your side controls, you'll see places to spawn from, such as Army Bases, Air Bases, and Fire Bases. These bases will in turn show a list of missions you can participate in and receive points for, should the mission prove a success. These missions will be generated automatically in response to the ebb and flow of battle, as well as by fellow players whose rank is high enough to create them.

$10
Monthly fee to play.

Once you're in the game world, the first thing you notice is how big it is. Even at half

For the Fatherland!

The run from Dinant to Spontin Fire Base had been a long one. No one was around to give me a lift in a half-track or truck, so I had to get there on foot. The Allies had captured Spontin, effectively cutting off Dinant's last supply line. I was hoping to sneak into Spontin unnoticed and capture the garage spawn point and stop the flow of enemy vehicles. Earlier, while jogging near the road, I had heard the sound of an oncoming tank, so I'd gone prone. Thank God for the tall grass—the passing French Char B1 Bis never saw me.

Now I saw Spontin in the distance and my heart sank: no cover. I'd have to go across open ground. I was feeling scared and vulnerable. I waited until I had full energy, then sprinted until my soldier started jogging again, signaling that he was too tired to continue at full speed. I went prone, hoping that no one had seen me, and rested again until I could resume a sprint. I repeated this until I was close enough to see the garage. As I stood up to make that final run, I heard tank engines starting in the garage and saw another Char emerge. Exposed, I dashed to the flag-bearing building. The Char's machine gun opened up, but it was too late. I was inside and the French flag turned to German. Spontin was now being "contested" because I had captured a spawn point, an action that also shut down the adjoining airfield. My commandant was right: One German soldier *is* worth 10 of the enemy.







36

Pieces of equipment that will be modeled in BLITZKRIEG 1940 (including handguns, grenades, rifles, machine guns, antitank guns, trucks, tanks, and planes).

Allied armor in a German antitank gunner's crosshairs.



The allies had nothing like the Germans' dreaded "88," which could punch through the thickest armor or shoot down enemy aircraft.

the Earth's size, Europe comprises roughly 390,000 square miles. Where you spawn from determines what you can take into battle, and ultimately, how quickly you can start fighting. Spawning into a city that is under attack is obviously the fastest way to get into the thick of things, but short of that, it might take a few minutes to find any action. Vehicles will obviously get to the fighting much quicker than foot soldiers. It's therefore tempting to spawn only as a tank or plane, but if you want to capture choke points (towns, cities, and so on), someone has to play the soldier because you can't spawn as a driver and then get out of your tank. This makes troop-carrying half-tracks and trucks very important.

The combat itself is hectic, even when there aren't a lot of players logged on. It's common to not see who or what killed you, and you're sometimes reluctant to shoot first for fear of giving yourself away. Voice utilities like Roger Wilco and Battlefield Communicator really shine here because coordinated attacks and effective communication help a great deal. The battles have a real rock-paper-scissors feel to them: Soldiers are small and can enter buildings; tanks can easily kill troops; antitank guns easily kill tanks; and aircraft can easily strafe ground units. It will become even more dangerous once troops can arm themselves with bazookas and sniper rifles, or even act as paratroopers. When the game goes live, however, the equipment list will reflect what the majority of soldiers carried in 1940: grenades, rifles, and machine guns.

Perhaps what impresses me most is that gamers will finally get a chance to play a WWII game in which strategy, not just combat, is key. Whether the combination of first-person combat and strategy will be compelling enough to draw a mainstream crowd remains to be seen. Will the promise of a higher rank be enough to keep players engaged? If attaining a higher rank means that the game becomes more interesting—say, you get better weapons—without becoming unbalanced, then the carrot approach could work well.

The other factor is the game's unpredictability. This isn't a historical re-enactment, so events could play out in an entirely different fashion. For example, the Germans might never make it out of Belgium, forcing the developers to start the "war" over again. Players may begin to wonder, "Can Paris fall?" or "Can England really be invaded?"

But this sort of unpredictability could reinforce the realism of the experience by echoing the thoughts and fears of real soldiers in the early 1940s. We'll soon see if the prospect of changing the outcome of the war will lure the men of our generation as it did those of half a century ago. —*Gordon Berg*





10,000

Maximum number of players per server.

With vehicles such as trucks, jeeps, tanks, and even helicopters, you'll have to get pretty good at flying, driving, and shooting in order to succeed.

OPERATION FLASHPOINT

As close as you'd want to get to real war

When HALO was first shown to the gaming press two years ago, it created a fervor for one simple reason: It offered a world in which realistic combat could take place. Not only could players pilot vehicles, but they could participate in a war on a grand scale. Unfortunately, HALO has lost some luster since it became an Xbox-first title. What's a PC gamer to do? Why, install the featured demo on this month's CG-ROM, that's what! OPERATION FLASHPOINT offers most everything HALO did, all of it in a real-world environment packed with the best Cold War technology. Vehicles? Yeah.



Squad-based tactical combat? Yup. Crappy console controls? No way. This is a game that could only exist on the PC, and we couldn't be happier.

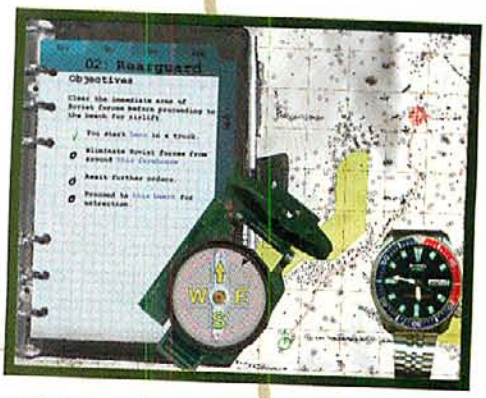
Glasnost, Nyet

It's 1985, and Gorbachev has ascended to power in the Soviet Union. Small pockets of the country refuse to accept his rule, so the Soviet military steps up to impose control over the territories. One spot in particular is causing the Soviets grief: the island of Kolgujev. Here, General Ivan Guba has a well-equipped army and a fierce hatred of the United States. He also has a few nukes. As the situation becomes more tense, Gorbachev and Reagan team up to build a NATO force to tear Guba from power. As a NATO grunt, you find yourself thrown into this explosive can of worms.

At the start of the game, you're a frontline infantryman following your squad leader around like a lost puppy. You'll tail him as he runs from team to team, rallying the troops, briefing squad leaders, and even picking up reinforcements. How does he pick up reinforcements, you ask? Why, with a jeep!

But wait, isn't this a first-person tactical shooter? Yes, but there's the additional dimension of vehicular manslaughter for extra zest. Not only will you be hot-wheeling it in jeeps, tanks, and whatever trucks you can find, you'll also get the chance to pilot a Cobra gunship. Yup, this is the first FPS game in which you'll be able to fly a helicopter—and wreak massive amounts of damage with it, too.

You'll need to get good at flying, driving, and gunning (not to mention grenade tossing and all-around foot soldiering) in order to progress up the ranks. As the game

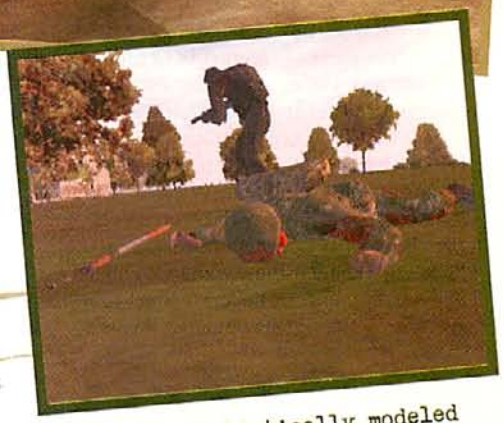


Before each mission, you'll get a detailed topographical map of the area you'll be entering.

Run Away!

The first time my squad succeeded in our objective—taking a small town guarded by a light tank and a handful of Russian troops—we soon found that our victory was a tad hollow. As our squad leader announced that our task had been completed, another squad member called out a slightly more important bit of information: "Russian T-72 tank...12 o'clock." What to do but run? Everyone sprinted for our rendezvous point, a chopper landing zone where we could be extracted. Unfortunately, that tank was faster than we were. Halfway to the zone, three of my squadmates were cut down by a blast from the tank's main gun. I dove for cover in some reeds by the waterfront, hunkering down to wait until the iron beast drove away. It finished off the rest of my squad before it finally wheeled off in another direction, probably searching for me. I managed to make it out alive, but I was the only one.





moves through 50-odd single-player missions, players gain promotions and even medals of honor.

Smart Soldiers

While its setting and scope are impressive, the game's artificial intelligence is even better. Nothing can yank you out of a virtual world faster than seeing enemy soldiers not notice their brethren falling to snipers. It's something the FLASHPOINT design team wanted to avoid. Unlike most games, FLASHPOINT models the actions of each soldier separately. Its troops are head and shoulders above the rest of the real-war crowd when it comes to judgment.

Soldiers from both sides of the conflict can spot and target muzzle flashes, use grenades properly, and even take over command if a leader is injured. They watch each other's backs; they also watch the area around them. Most of FLASHPOINT's combat takes place at great distances, due to the extensive open maps and the high-powered rifles on each side. In most games, great distance between yourself and an enemy means that you can fire and miss, and your enemy will be none the wiser. In FLASHPOINT, the enemy knows when he's being fired upon.

While FLASHPOINT will offer multiplayer capabilities, it should also give solo players a healthy challenge. The AI players are sometimes indistinguishable from real ones; I've seen them break and run from battle, run to the medic for help, and empty entire clips without landing a single shot. Of course, other times I've seen them take out armored vehicles, drop grenades into the middle of enemy troop formations, and generally behave like all-around badasses. That's the wonder of FLASHPOINT: Your computer-controlled allies behave like a cross between UNREAL TOURNAMENT bots and ROGUE SPEAR team members.

With such convincing realism elements, FLASHPOINT has attracted a large following even before its release. The demo is one of the most popular downloads both in the United States and Europe, and several fans have created mods for it. While they're not on the scale of HALF-LIFE mods, they are a sign of a growing user community.

There are a few sticky wickets, however. The main problem with FLASHPOINT is the voice acting. While it's not a hindrance,

Damage is realistically modeled according to when and where a character has been hit.

there is a constant stream of squad chatter coming over your headphones during combat. It helps sort out what's going on in the hectic battles, but it also gets annoying after a while. The voices of your squadmates are flat and use the syntax of a talking clock. "Oh no....Seven...is down," "Six...attack... missile...soldier." It can be a drag to have to listen to these voices again and again. Also, the interface and controls are still a little rough around the edges.

These are piddling complaints when you consider that the game has already developed a better buzz than WORLD WAR II ONLINE, which is attempting to capture the same feel, albeit in a different era. OPERATION FLASHPOINT is poised to be one hot number. Look for the battle to begin in September. —*Alex Handy*

A Soldier's Story

Time and time again, you will experience things in FLASHPOINT that seem true to life.

One time, I circled the outskirts of a village my squad was storming. None of the enemy soldiers in the town had any idea that I was behind them. I fired a few rounds and dropped one of them. But as soon as my bullets found their target, I found myself awash in a hail of lead. I crawled behind a bush and looked back to see that the soldiers I had ambushed were still firing at my previous location. Not only that, but while two of them were firing at that location, two others had swung around and begun to crawl on their bellies toward my position. I was in trouble.

Thankfully, I had a lot of cover in the form of a dense thicket. I crawled along the length of it and then rose to my feet and sprinted for a nearby jeep.

I hopped in and floored it out of town—only to drive right into a column of more Russian soldiers. I freaked, swerved into a tree, and was blown to a bloody pulp by a grenade.

COMMANDOS 2

Experience *Where Eagles Dare* on your PC

It's odd that with World War II commando movies ranging from *The Guns of Navarone* all the way to *Saving Private Ryan* inspiring us with their heroes' bravado, drive, and aura of cool, not much has been done with the premise, gamewise. Where can gamers experience the thrill of breaking into Nazi fortresses, bombing the hell out of Nazi gun emplacements, or running around ruined cities—shooting and commandoing hither and thither?

Well, there was COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES, a game many people enjoyed. Unfortunately, I wasn't one of them. To me it felt more like TETRIS with Green Berets than like a Dirty Dozen homage. The tactical decisions behind using commandos boiled down to figuring out the one correct solution that the designers intended. It was a puzzle game.

Not so with COMMANDOS 2.

The Dirtiest Three-Quarter Dozen Around

A game based on stealth needs to give you the ability to reconnoiter your area. In COMMANDOS 2 you're no longer trapped in a static screen, forced to plan your moves from a restrictive angle. Hit the Alt key, swing your mouse around, and voilà, you get a whole new angle from which to view the situation. No more waltzing around a building just to be tagged by an unknown enemy; now you can spot him around the corner by swinging the camera around. Can't quite make out what's moving near that building? Zoom right on in. Before storming into a building, peek into a window to get a picture-in-picture view of what's inside.

Your commandos' skills become more valuable because the flexibility of the mission design emphasizes better use of them. Have your thief run in, bop an enemy on the head, and follow up with the Green Beret tying up the fool. Get your sapper to detonate an explosive, and when those silly Nazis come to investigate, your already positioned sniper can start picking them off from his cozy spot at the attic window. Use the aggressive guard settings to set up elaborate ambushes.

The characters are so personalized that

4 HOURS

The time it took me, following the walk-through exactly, to finish a mission involving the capture of a German town.



Rather than haphazardly jumping into a building, use the picture-in-picture view to get a look at things to come.

2 DAYS

The time it took Darby's Rangers to seize the Italian outpost at Sened in February 1943.



You can check the line-of-sight of one guy at a time (represented by that green field) to help you figure out the best way to sneak around.



Rat Patrol

Well-planned ambushes make fine tales, but the best stories mix success with the absurd—like using a pet rat to distract five guards before subjecting them to a high-powered explosive.

Here's how it happened: Five Nazis were guarding an important bridge pass. Even if I use a sniper, one of them is bound to notice his buddies falling, which would give away my presence. I could have my sapper lay down an explosive, but he's going to be seen.

So, it's time to use the thief's rat.

The rat darts in and does a little dance, transfixing the guards. My sapper is able to sneak by, lay down some explosives, and dart away to a safe distance. The rat then runs back to its owner, and the sapper detonates.

Five fewer Nazis in the mission.

Tactical ambushes are fun and all, but nothing beats a rat and a bomb.





Zoom out to survey the whole map in crisp high-resolution, or zoom in to pick out the littlest insect or minor detail.

even their movements are unique. The thief will scamper around obstacles to get to his destination, and can climb like a hyperactive monkey. The Green Beret, on the other hand, will simply charge through or jump over most obstacles, and needs the help of ladders to move at all in the vertical axis. The squad's skills and abilities, fused together, make for a crack team that would do Richard Burton proud.

Where Gamers Dare

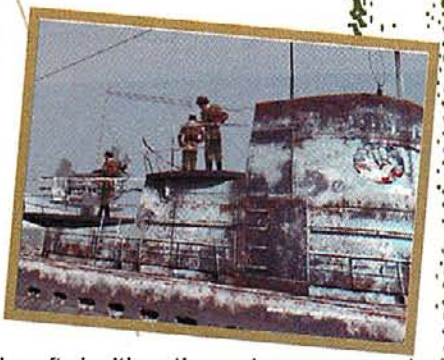
COMMANDOS 2 is overall a more tactical game. The new visuals result in better planning, and more focused commandos translate to better execution. The open-ended mission design allows for use of tactics rather than rote memorization of enemy paths and positions. After a walk-through, helpful though it was, I was able to rescue certain people in a completely different order, and eliminate Nazis using different resources. Given that I barely stomached the first mission of the original game, it's refreshing to see that I now have a choice about how to proceed in a given mission, and consequently, I actually want to play more than one mission. This is as close to *Where Eagles Dare* as I can get, and I'll happily be guiding "Tiny" around the map when COMMANDOS 2 ships this summer. —*Thierry Nguyen*

OVER 500

Number of kills by Finnish soldier Simo Hayha, the most decorated sniper of WWII, during the invasion of Finland.



HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2



Early sightings of this game suggest that it is progressing nicely at Illusion Softworks in the Czech Republic. The original game was a remarkably tense and well-designed (albeit buggy) squad-based combat simulation set in World War II. The sequel appears to be even more meticulously crafted, with motion-capture animation, more interesting settings, better control, and vastly improved multiplayer options.

In the sequel, scheduled for release this fall, gamers will again control an elite British squad during the second World War. You'll lead your team from either a first- or third-person perspective on covert operations throughout the world, from Burmese jungles to Northern Africa to Europe. This time you'll have more vehicles to choose from, including trucks, tanks, motorcycles, and planes.

Online combat in H&D2 will include deathmatches, capture the flag, team games, and the option to play as Axis forces. We'll bring you more details as soon as we get a closer look.

ROGUE SPEAR: BLACK THORN

UbiSoft is developing a standalone add-on to the reigning king of single-player tactical sims, ROGUE SPEAR. Few details are available, other than the fact that the game is being developed at UbiSoft's studio in Montreal, and that it will feature 14 new missions and a host of new multiplayer features. The game reportedly will have higher production values than the previous ROGUE SPEAR add-on, COVERT OPS, which was created by a different developer and lacked the original game's voice-acting and multimedia.

We do know some details about the story: John Clark and his crew will battle a group of nut jobs who are re-creating notorious terrorist acts. It turns out that the group's leader is a former member of Team Rainbow who was thrown out years before for torturing a captured terrorist. After his psych test revealed that he had developed psychotic tendencies, Clark tossed him out. Vengeful, he became a mercenary and has been stockpiling weapons and recruiting particularly merciless terrorists to his organization, dubbed Black Thorn. His goal: the destruction of Team Rainbow, and serious noogies for Clark.

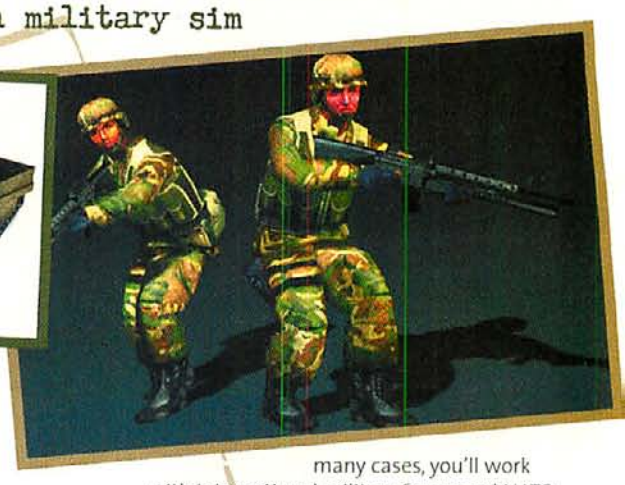
Sounds like ROGUE SPEAR fans will have their hands full when the add-on ships this fall.



TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON

RAINBOW SIX creators set their sights on a military sim





RAINBOW SIX is about to be reborn hard. Instead of dealing with terrorists, the next major release from Red Storm Entertainment will focus on covert strikes on military targets using state-of-the-art "land warrior" weapon systems. You'll command a squad of well-trained, heavily armed stealth soldiers sent into hostile territory to neutralize military targets or support allied forces. You're not after tangos anymore, you're after tanks.

Other than the fact that it's a realistic shooter, GHOST RECON will bear few similarities to ROGUE SPEAR. "We have a new engine, totally new characters, a new story line, a new way of controlling the team," says Red Storm's chief game designer Brian Upton. "We think that even the most battle-hardened RAINBOW SIX veteran will be excited by where GHOST RECON is taking the tactical shooter genre."

In the early demo we saw, players controlled a soldier from either a first- or third-person perspective. The detailed mission planning of the earlier games was gone, with players issuing commands on the fly. With the game's heavy reliance on stealth tactics, Red Storm has created a new belly-crawl position that lets players worm their way toward enemy positions. Some of the graphics were still rough, but the terrain and vegetation looked surprisingly realistic.

Missions vary from peacekeeping operations to military strikes. At some times your team will work independently; at others you'll call in assistance from helicopters, troops in tanks, and close air support. In many cases, you'll work with international military forces and NATO to fight rising dictators and rebel groups. Some of the missions require you to blow up bridges to stop an advance, raid rebel bases, and rescue an American pilot who gets shot down in enemy territory.

Even more intriguing is Red Storm's plan to implement the Army's newest "land warrior" equipment. Each player will have a small eyepiece that shows GPS positions and the location of your troops. You'll also be packing some serious firepower, like the military's new "smart gun"—a combination rifle and grenade launcher that fires 20mm explosive rounds—and the M-136 Anti-Tank Rocket.

GHOST RECON is scheduled to come out on the Xbox and PC sometime next year, but we'll bring you more on it as soon as we get a closer look. —*Jeff Green*

Soldiers in GHOST RECON can lie prone and take out targets up to a half-mile away.

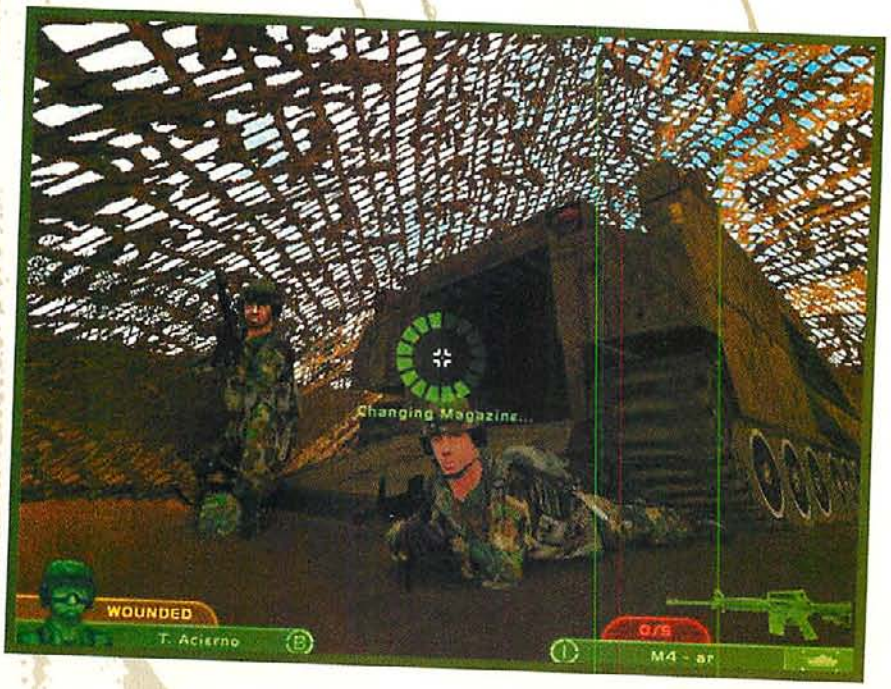


The Army's "Smart Gun"

GHOST RECON will feature a new high-tech military weapon that looks like something out of a video game. The gun doesn't shoot lasers or shrink-rays, but it does have a laser range finder to determine the exact distance at which to detonate its explosive munitions. It can lay more firepower on farther targets with greater accuracy than any light infantry weapon in use today.

Dubbed the OICW, for "objective individual combat weapon," the Pentagon's "smart gun" can be a dual- or single-barrel weapon. The removable top barrel hurls 20mm high-explosive fragmentation rounds up to 1,000 meters away. The lower barrel shoots NATO-standard 5.56mm ammo. The range finder pinpoints the distance at which the fragmenting round has to detonate to kill the enemy even if he is hiding behind trees or walls or in trenches. The 20mm gun's range is five times greater than that of an M203 grenade launcher mounted on an M16.

The Pentagon plans to put 45,000 OICWs into service by 2006, at a cost of between $10,000 and $12,000 each.





The terrain and vehicles (such as this Russian T-34) will boast impressive detail in CM 2.

COMBAT MISSION 2

The 2000 Wargame of the Year gets a graphics upgrade, heads to the Russian Front

COMBAT MISSION has taken wargaming by storm. Its 3D graphics, hybrid turn-based and real-time action, and attention to historical detail combine to offer the best depiction of squad-level action we've seen so far on the PC. It was unquestionably the Wargame of the Year for 2000.

Since its release last June, the online community has embraced CM with hundreds of user-created mods to improve the units, terrain, casualty sounds, and special effects. There are even mods to replace the soldiers' faces with those of actors from famous movies (*The Big Red One*, *Rat Patrol*, *Kelly's Heroes*) or even furry little hamsters.



One mod maker took a dare too far in creating furry faces for the soldiers.

But after eight months of supporting the mod community and gamers, Big Time Software is focusing on the next game in the series. Codesigner Steve Grammont says the plan is to make a number of significant improvements, but not "break the mold" the way the original game did.

CM 2 moves to the Russian Front from the opening guns of Operation Barbarossa in 1941 to the collapse of Berlin in 1945. There were a lot of nationalities in that conflict, but Big Time is focusing primarily on the Germans, Soviets, Finnish, Romanian, Hungarian, and perhaps Italian forces.

The scale of the actual battles boggles the imagination, with hundreds of thousands of soldiers and armored units churned into a bloody stew in the open fields around Kursk and Stalingrad. Grammont says Big Time plans to break those battles into smaller scenarios to make them manageable. The game will also depict a number of urban battles, for which Big Time is creating new building architecture. The team is even reconstructing part of Stalingrad's sewer system to depict the underground fighting that took place there.

Command and control will be an issue, as it was historically. In 1941, most of the Russian tanks didn't have radios; the tankers had to use hand signals to communicate. The command model is changing in CM 2 to reflect such difficulties. This may force you to "do the lemming thing," Grammont says. "Plot a simple path, and if things go wrong prepare to lose your tanks."

Unit availability will also change, with different options that let you choose between paying extra for rare units or acquiring them based on the historical likelihood that they would have been available.

But the most obvious change for CM2 will be a complete graphics overhaul. The game's minimum resolution will be 800x600, and Big Time is dropping support for Voodoo 1 cards, whose drivers are "buggier than an anthill," says Grammont.

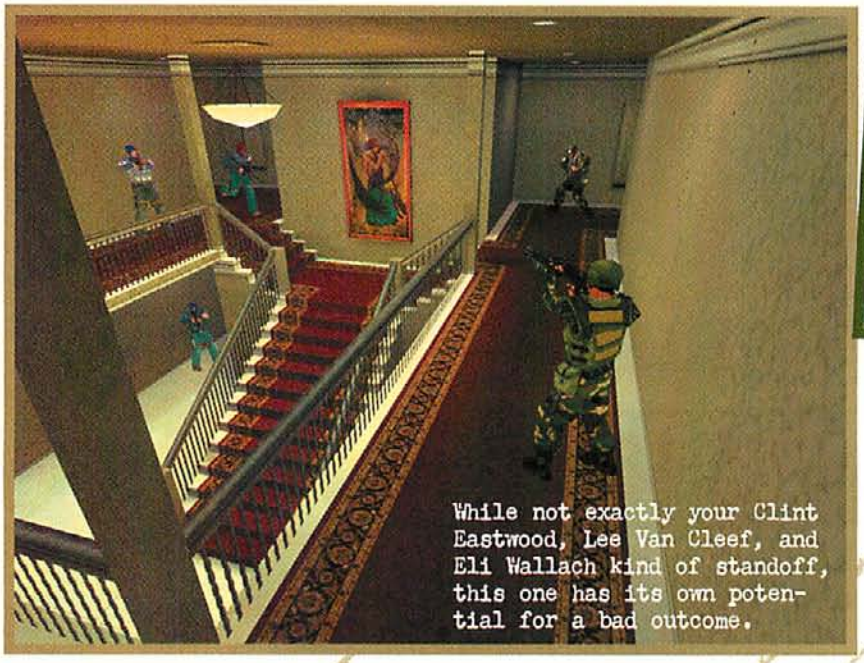
Save your sheckels, wargamers. You'll want to be part of the first wave when CM 2 rolls this fall. —*Ken Brown*

Mod-enhanced explosion in COMBAT MISSION

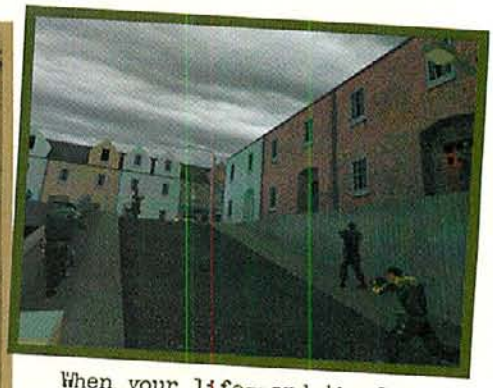


GLOBAL OPERATIONS

Fight in the free-fire zones of 16 real-world flashpoints



While not exactly your Clint Eastwood, Lee Van Cleef, and Eli Wallach kind of standoff, this one has its own potential for a bad outcome.



When your life--and the lives of your comrades--is on the line, it's easy to understand the value of teamwork.

Belfast. Chechnya. Sri Lanka. Israel. Just the thought of these locations resonates like machine-gun fire through barricaded streets. These are the places ripped from the headlines of today's news, where government forces and "freedom fighters" see eye to eye only through the sights of rifles. If you're looking to add verisimilitude to a tactical shooter, you need look no further than the globe's political hot spots. Because COUNTER-STRIKE is fiction, but armed insurrection is real.

Such are the settings for Barking Dog Studios' GLOBAL OPERATIONS, a multiplayer-only first-person shooter coming this winter from Crave Entertainment. But this won't be a simple street-fighting sim. Chris Mair, the game's designer, says the multiplayer missions in GLOBAL OPS will have extensive story lines. The game is set about a year in the future, but it's based on real-world situations taken from the last 25 years of terrorism. "We tried to pick out individual events that were really unique," Mair says.

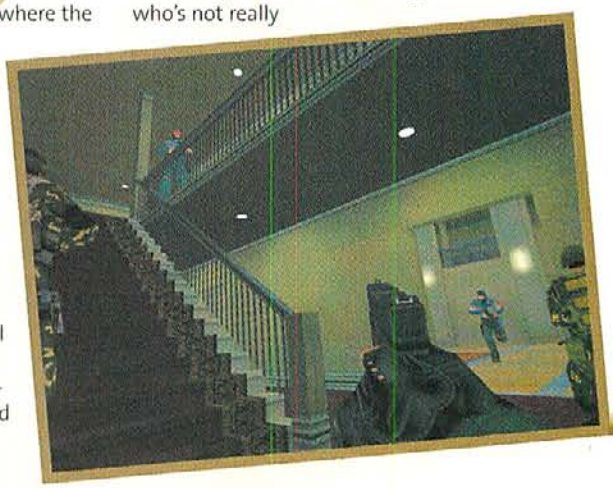
Players will find themselves embroiled in such locales as Sri Lanka, where the Tamil Tigers are locked in a bitter struggle with the Indian government; and Peru, where the Peruvian Special Forces are battling a group of "freedom fighters" (or terrorists, depending on your point of view). According to Mair, "There's a gray area surrounding who's right and who's wrong in each location in the game."

Barking Dog hopes that these real-world conflicts will help gamers buy into the team play concept that they believe is crucial to multiplayer first-person action. And they're adding rewards to further promote team play. "We found that when we played COUNTER-STRIKE, the sublime moments in the game came when we actually played together. That's what inspired us to work on GLOBAL OPERATIONS," Mair says.

Producer Dan McBride adds, "We can't force people to play cooperatively. You can still play team deathmatch if you want to. But if you use the facilities that we put in the game to reinforce team play, you'll win every time."

To deepen the experience, teams won't just play as generic terrorists (bad guys) and generic government forces (good guys). GLOBAL OPS will boast seven unique specialty classes, all designed to work together. For instance, the recon specialist is like a scout. His radar can spot things that other classes can't see; if other players want to know what's ahead they can work with a recon. The medic can heal other players and hostages. The demolition expert can defuse bombs faster than the others.

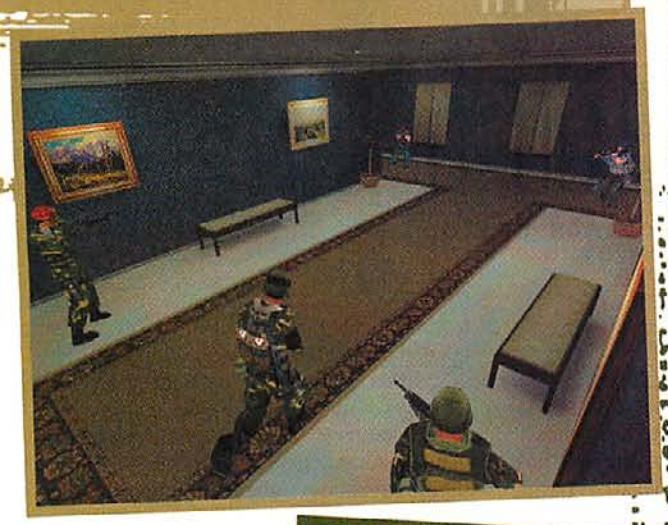
Other specialty classes include heavy-gunners, snipers, and a commando. The seventh specialist is the intelligence officer, who's not really



A Little Hot Water

When some countries learned of Barking Dog's interest in using 16 real-world locales for GLOBAL OPERATIONS, they weren't too pleased about it. While conflicts in the game involving Russia and Chechnya haven't gained the attention of our friends on the other side of the Caucasus Mountains, let's just say that a certain "kingdom" in the North Atlantic seriously objected to Barking Dog depicting a conflict that it's been involved in since 1916.

When the game ships, players may notice striking similarities to some real-world confrontations with slightly different names for Belfast and perhaps one or two other locations. And the organizations won't be called the British Army or the IRA, or the game wouldn't make it onto store shelves in the United Kingdom.

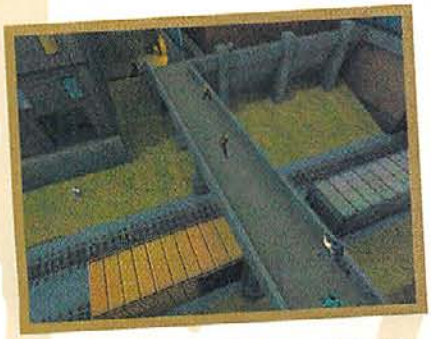


an active participant in the level. "He's sort of the guy in Aliens who sits in the van and watches the action," says Mair. "He brings the game's voice communication (voice over IP) together. He can communicate to all players, living or dead. He can talk to everyone in the game. It's sort of cheating to talk directly to someone if you're dead, but talking to your commander is a little bit different because he saw where the last action was anyway. There's a camera on every player so he can tell—visually—where everyone is. He can talk to every player as well as monitor everyone's health status. So he can tell a medic to go to a specific location. He can even set waypoints."



The weapons arsenal is frighteningly authentic.

The designers are working on improving the scorecard interface, so that you can easily tell who's on your team, what specialties are missing, and what role players you need. They're also handling players' deaths in an innovative way. Players will be reinserted in the game as reinforcements. According to Mair, "Reinforcements don't just chat amongst themselves while floating in space and flying around the level. They come back in the game in one of the game's vehicles and they can talk to each other in the vehicle and plan for the mission. They can see what everyone's buying; they can see what specialties are being filled. And they come back into the game as a group." Barking Dog believes that when players are inserted in the game in groups, it's easier to play as a team.



Large outdoor environments are interesting and well designed.

While the game I saw was only 60 percent complete, it was super fun to play. Keep it in your sights as it nears its Christmas release—so far everything Barking Dog is doing seems right on target.

—*Wil O'Neil*

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE 2



So you're probably wondering: Will SOLDIER OF FORTUNE 2 be anywhere near as bloody as the first game? Well, only in the sense that it wouldn't be a complete surprise if the game boxes dripped blood and used still-warm human entrails as packing material when the title ships late this year.

But that's what fans of the series want, and that's what Raven is promising to deliver, thanks to an even more detailed body location–specific damage model and an insanely ambitious use of Raven's proprietary "bolt-on" technology that will let gamers blow off half of an enemy's skull while leaving the desocketed eyeball intact and flopping around on its distended optic nerve. Now *that's* wholesome family entertainment.

But the best news about the game is that Raven seems to be putting all its stunning technology to better use this time around. Learning a little from games like RAINBOW SIX, for SOF2 Raven is using the QUAKE III–powered fog, rain, and terrain effect to create genuinely compelling environments and to craft missions in which stealth should be as much a factor as marksmanship. A new prone-crawling feature will let wannabe mercenaries slither through tall Colombian grass to assault an enemy camp. Gamers will have to make themselves temporarily vulnerable as they take the time to pick locks on doors, and they'll be able to use the sparkling dynamic lighting effects to their advantage by hunting down power boxes and dousing the lights in enemy installations.

If Raven can deliver more of the tense, adrenaline-pumping situational gameplay the first game produced only sporadically, then SOLDIER OF FORTUNE 2 could be one of the standout shooters of 2001. —*Robert Coffey*



THE MAGNIFICENT 7

Top tactical sim mods for fragging terrorists online



When you're ready to branch out from COUNTER-STRIKE, give these mods a shot. All share the common thread of realism-in squad-based combat, with realistic gameplay, characters, weapons, and/or real-world environments.

Firearms [Half-Life]

FIREARMS is a squad-based combat mod, utilizing an arsenal of more than 30 pistols, rifles, submachine guns, and mortars.





What's cool about it is that you can customize characters in a seemingly infinite number of ways. It's based on a credit system in which credits can be used for buying armor, speed ratings, weapons, equipment, and skills such as marksmanship or field medicine. Stamina, bleeding wounds, mortar attacks, and airborne drops are implemented for a more robust environment.

www.firearms.com

Day of Defeat [Half-Life]

Matt Boone's DAY OF DEFEAT is a realistic portrayal of World War II squad-based infantry battles. Players can choose Axis (Germany, Italy, or Japan) or Allied (United States, England, or France) forces. Characters, weapons, and maps show an incredible attention to detail, with environments displaying a gothic European feel. There are plenty of weapons to choose from, ranging from M1 Garands to MP40s, and several well-balanced character classes. Axis characters even use German dialect. Maps have plenty of maneuvering space, so neither attackers nor defenders have the advantage. Unlike most beta-release mods, DAY OF DEFEAT is an outstanding first attempt.



www.dayofdefeatmod.com

Frontline [Half-Life]

Similar in style to TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC, FRONTLINE divides players into two teams: Attackers and Defenders. The Attackers' goal is to seize as many Capture Points as possible; Defenders try to protect them. Once CPs are seized, Defenders cannot recapture them. If all CPs are captured before time runs out, the Attackers win. At the end of the game, roles switch, with Attackers becoming Defenders. As in TFC, fragged players respawn after a brief period. There's also a stamina feature to ensure that players are not bunny hopping all over the map. Characters are divided into Recon, Assault, and Support classes and can choose from 12 real-world pistols, shotguns, submachine guns, and rifles.

www.flfmod.com

Urban Terror [Quake 3 Arena]

URBAN TERROR is a team-based military Total Conversion using the Quake 3 engine. Urban terror sacrifices some realism for gameplay, allowing players to grab ledges, climb buildings, or bunny hop during combat. But there is a catch: Characters constantly running, hopping, and shooting experience decreased weapon accuracy. Expect improved bullet impact effects, including window cracks and ricochets, in the URBAN TERROR Beta 2 release. Also expect a few more real-world weapons, like an M4 assault rifle with improved weapons physics; more game types and maps; and a more sophisticated hit-detection system.

www.urbanterror.net

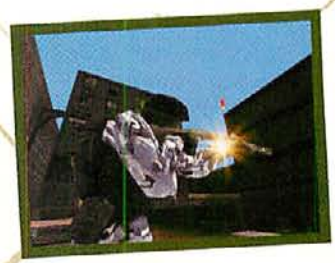
Tactical Ops [Unreal Tournament]

Similar to COUNTER-STRIKE, TAC OPS lets players play as Special Forces or Terrorists in two scenarios: Hostage Rescue and Escape. TAC OPS features bigger urban maps, a variety of mission parameters, dynamic effects such as weather, and a skeletal animation system for player models. Part of TAC OPS' intrigue is the addition of NPC characters. Hostages may run away, or pick up weapons and shoot Terrorists. In some cases, Terrorists get more money by arresting hostages rather than killing them outright. There are also bots, so players can practice on their own. Beta 2 fixes bugs and adds features, including new skins, more maps and scenarios, and more weapons. A mission editor will also be included.

www.tactical-ops.net

Infiltration [Unreal Tournament]

If the name of the game is realism, then INFILTRATION does a decent job of mimicking real-world combat using a variety of tactical mission plans. INFILTRATION weapons follow realistic models and include a wide range of ammo types and capacities. Rather than using crosshairs, Infiltration forces players to use the weapons' fixed sights, so aiming becomes more a matter of weapon familiarization than shooter skill. Player loadouts are highly customizable. Cash doesn't carry over from game to game, so gameplay is more balanced—both sides start out with the same amount of money.



www.planetunreal.com/infiltration

Strike Force [Unreal Tournament]

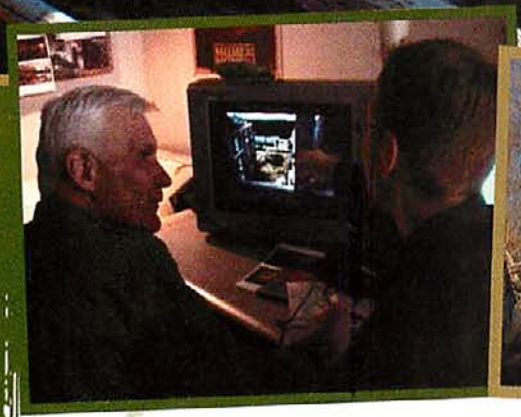
STRIKE FORCE lets you play as a member of Strike Force or the Terrorists in a number of game types, from traditional UT games, like DM and Team DM, to realism mod favorites like Jailbreak and Hostage Rescue. STRIKE FORCE offers plenty of weapons, including a wide assortment of explosives and munitions. Roger Wilco voice software allows chat between team members. There's also an abundance of SF-specific maps with good strategic outlay. The 1.6 patch fixes several bugs, improves maps and textures, and adds dynamic effects and weapons.

www.strikeforcecenter.com

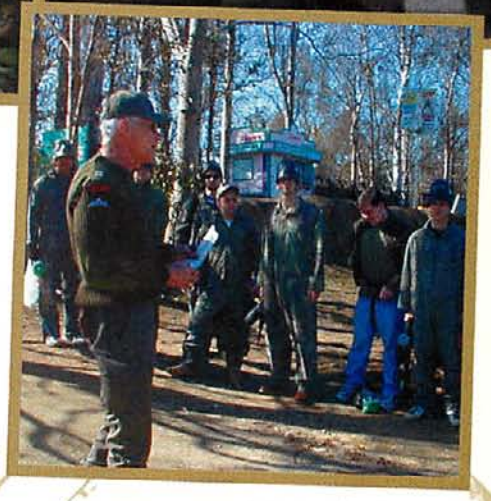












COMBAT COMMANDER

Dale Dye teaches designers how to make war

Captain Dale Dye is the entertainment industry's pre-eminent military adviser. He's played a role in more than 40 films, most notably teaching Tom Hanks how to assault a pillbox in *Saving Private Ryan* and helping Oliver Stone create the haunting combat scenes in *Platoon*.

Dye's expertise came the hard way: 21 years in the Marine Corps, including three tours of duty in Vietnam, where he earned three Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star. The 56-year-old often puts actors through "boot camps" that can last two weeks, during which they sleep in foxholes, eat C rations, and begin training before dawn.

One of Dye's latest projects is to impart military authenticity to Electronic Arts' MEDAL OF HONOR games (ALLIED ASSAULT for the PC, FRONTLINE for the PS2). He gave the developers weapons training, taught them some assault tactics, and gave them an education in what it's like to be a soldier.

We caught up with Dye by phone while he was in England filming the HBO series *Band of Brothers*. We found him to be remarkably affable and easygoing.

What are your goals when you're working on a war movie or video game?

I have one major goal: I believe in my heart as a professional military man that our American men and women who serve in uniform are some of the greatest unsung heroes in the world. They've been given a bad rap. There are too many lies, and too many stereotypes. My overall agenda is to do what I can to correct that.

My other goal, when I work on a game, is to offer a little bit of education, to make a game player realize that soldiering isn't a joke. It takes thinking.

What's the hardest thing to do right in depicting realistic combat in a PC game?

To inject fear. You never get in a game that complete disconnect that lets you unplug from reality and lose yourself. In some ways, I'm glad, because it's frightening. We have to substitute tension and uncertainty in a game with various challenges.

What did you do for the MOH team?

I just drilled 'em into the deck. I told the designers, "We're going to take you out and fire real weapons, run you tactically, teach you what it's like to be a leader, to be a follower, and to experience the tension of combat." And after doing so, I could tell it changed their conception of how to handle some things in the game.

What are the most interesting features to you about MOH?

What's slick about this game is that the enemy does unexpected things. You can wound them and they'll still survive and still be dangerous. Terrain and weather and daylight affect your capability just like in combat. There's a fatigue factor that plays a role in movement. It's going to be a tough deal on a player. But it's fun! It's not so complicated that you need a six-inch-thick manual to play the game.

David Grossman, a former U.S. Army Ranger, has called some video games "murder simulators" with no redeeming value. What's your view?

I'd have to say he's painting with too broad a brush. We have an opportunity in gaming to do more than turn the alien's head into a pink mist. PC games are vastly beyond that now. They could be and in some cases are really interesting teaching tools. If you teach a kid and entertain him at the same time, he'll really learn.

I'm not a person who believes playing [shooters] inures a child to violence. I think there's so much more to it. If there were no parenting, and computer games became surrogate parents, then I think you'd have a point. But I don't believe most people let that happen. I don't with my kids. CGW

Derek Jeter caught reading.

REVIEWS

It's not the size of your game; it's the play in it.

An interesting quandary came up during this month's reviews meeting, where we hash out the final star rating for each game we review. Strangely, it had nothing to do with the wine selection in our gourmet-catered spread that Jeff springs for each month (we went with a sassy little Chardonnay). Love that new Editor-in-Chief! Hang on while I wipe off my nose.

No, the debate this month centered around that age-old question: What's more important, quality or quantity? What sparked it was our discussion of the new HALF-LIFE "episode," BLUE SHIFT (see review on pg. 84). The consensus of those who had played it through (myself; Scooter, who reviewed it; Robert, who had extra time on his hands 'cause he turns everything in on time like a big suck-up; and Jason, who had extra time on his hands because he was avoiding work) was that it was a great game and very much in the spirit of the original HALF-LIFE—but that it was way too short. The question came up, what do you do when a game offers Editor's Choice-level gameplay, but in terms of what you get for your money, is only a 4-star package?

Ultimately, we went with 4 stars (it was a close vote, 4-3) in part because of the influence of another much anticipated game this month, SERIOUS SAM.

SERIOUS SAM offers hours upon hours of more simplistic (but very fun) gameplay, for under $20. As you'll see in Old Man Green's review on page 87, SERIOUS SAM was serious fun, but it could have been a tad shorter and it is a pretty brainless shooter. Not that there's anything wrong with that.

Tell us what you think. The question is not what's more important, quality or quantity; obviously quality is key, but what's considered *enough* quantity? What's the appropriate length of a game, considering how much you shelled out for it? Do extras like graphics makeovers or co-op play make a difference? Write me at Tom_Price@ziffdavis.com. I'll be here playing BLUE SHIFT for the third time in two days, loving every second of it. Unless I boot up SERIOUS SAM; then I'll be up all night. —*Tom Price*



Serious Sam

JULY REVIEWS

GAME	RATING
Tribes 2	★★☆☆☆
Tropico	★★★½☆
Myst III: Exile	★★☆☆☆
Half-Life: Blue Shift	★★★★☆
Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns	★★★★☆
The Sims: House Party	★★★★½
Serious Sam	★★★★½
Fate of the Dragon	★★½☆☆
Summoner	★★★★☆
Ultima Online: Third Dawn	★½☆☆☆
Out Of The Park 3	★★★½☆
MICROS:	
Traffic Giant	★★½☆☆
Game Room	★★☆☆☆
Outlive	★★★½☆
Waterloo	★★☆☆☆
Majesty: The Northern Expansion	★★★★☆

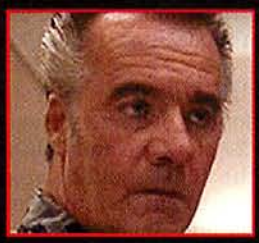
HOW DO WE RATE? We review only finished games — no betas, no patches.

★★★★★



OUTSTANDING The rare game that gets it all right. A must-play experience.

★★★★☆



VERY GOOD Worthy of your time and money, but there are drawbacks.

★★★☆☆



AVERAGE Either an ambitious design with major flaws, or just vanilla.

★★☆☆☆



WEAK Seriously lacking in play value, poorly conceived, or just another clone.

★☆☆☆☆



ABYSMAL The rare game that gets it all wrong. Pathetic. Coaster material.

If it's broke, fix it

Unfinished Business

TRIBES 2
reviewed by Tom Price

To call TRIBES 2 anything less than a major disappointment would be dishonest. Consider the raucous prerelease buzz generated by everything from the huge cult following its predecessor enjoyed to the almost daily release of amazing screenshots in the months leading up to the final gold burning. How could we expect anything less than perfection? Well, even slightly less would have been okay.

But TRIBES 2 is far, far from perfect. It shipped in a buggy, unstable state and it remained in a buggy, unstable state at the time of this writing, approximately one month and five patches later. Like a public statue, TRIBES 2's massively multiplayer team-based gameplay is built upon a solid foundation, but it's too covered in pigeon poop for anyone to recognize or enjoy it.

Diamond Sword in the Rough

Since telling you what's wrong with TRIBES 2 is going to take a while (put your feet up, make yourself a hot toddy), maybe I should tell you what's right with it first. The underlying gameplay of 1998's STARSIEGE: TRIBES—which involved fast-paced, first-person-shooter action supported by a strong strategic element—enriched the complexity of team-based scenarios such as "capture the flag" or "capture and hold." Thankfully, said gameplay still resides at the core of TRIBES 2, but with more capabilities and options for the strategy aspect of the game.

What's been added to the game is big physically, yet in the larger picture, it's kind of small. In TRIBES, only two flying vehicles were available: a one-man scout and a larger transport ship. TRIBES 2 adds more vehicles, including a two-man hovertank, a three-man flying bomber, and a scout cycle. Sounds exciting, right? But when you consider how hard all of these are to pilot and how woeful their weapons are (one could argue necessarily so, for proper game balancing), they seem like a waste from the strategy standpoint—unless the people you're playing with can coordinate an attack.

CGW RATED



PROS
Proven TRIBES-style gameplay is mostly intact.

CONS
Bug-o-rama.

Weapons remain relatively unchanged; whether that's for better or worse depends on your perspective. I would have liked to have seen more guns and guns of different types. Why must there be only one machine gun, without multiple calibers or secondary fire? As they are, the weapons are fairly boring, although their effects (smoke trails, colored glows, and so on) do look sort of cool. If you were happy with the weapons in TRIBES, there's really nothing to fault about their state in TRIBES 2. Still, with two-plus years of development, I'd expect a little more (a running theme in my head).



PUSHING POLYGONS How could any game engine, running on any current PC, be expected to render such huge, complex objects? They look real nice, but someone's eyes were bigger than their stomach.



Inexperienced Internet Interfacing

Those years of development make themselves apparent in the improved interface. Meant to help foster the TRIBES community, email, chat, message boards, and news have been added to the requisite server browser. The intent behind these features is doubtless a good one, but how well they'll be executed remains to be seen.

It wasn't until very recently that anything other than news or chat was even implemented, which is ridiculous for a game being sold as "final." And how will Sierra and Dynamix handle people being critical of the game in the forums? Again, only time will tell.

Bugs 'R' Us

Now for the bad news. Every build I've seen of TRIBES 2—from the early alphas of a year and a half ago to the "final" gold build—has had more trouble avoiding crashes than the *Hindenberg*. The code started out notoriously unstable, and what finally made it

Requirements: Pentium-II 300, 64MB RAM, 531MB hard drive space. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium-III 600, 128MB RAM.
3D Support: OpenGL, Direct3D. **Multiplayer:** LAN or Internet (2–64 players).
Publisher: Sierra • Developer: Dynamix • $45 • www.sierrastudios.com/games/tribes2 • ESRB Rating: Teen (13+); animated violence.





TEAM EFFORT If you're lucky, you'll get into a match with people who really know how to play and can utilize things like targeting lasers and artillery.

TOE TO TOE It all comes down to one-on-one machine-gun battles, and usually he with the most armor wins.

into gamers' hands has continued that tradition. The patch that was downloaded the first time I connected to the online servers didn't help much, and neither have the subsequent—almost weekly—updates. Admittedly, the automated patching process was fluid and painless. Of course, that's like saying my car has special reinforced chassis points to make lifting it at the mechanic's shop that much easier. It's a feature I would rather not need.

I've been playing the game on a Pentium-III 933 with a GeForce2 card and the graphics performance (even set moderately at 1074x768 and 16-bit color) is extremely choppy. This is running in OpenGL, not the native Direct3D of my nVidia-based chipset that it would make sense to use. No, Direct3D is simply unplayable, and what I can see when using it is full of weird jaggies and disappearing polygons. I don't think the bad performance is totally the fault of the programmers. The level designers got a bit carried away with ridiculously large expanses and huge edifices that are not only extremely taxing on the engine but are also too big for gameplay purposes. I don't like spending three minutes running across a map just to get blown up and respawned back at the beginning, over and over again.

Then there's the issue of "red-jacking." Red-jacking is another word for temporarily losing your connection to the game server (a little phone-jack icon in your display turns red—get it?), leaving you frozen, stuck in an extended lag. You can tell when other gamers are red-jacking, because they just float there, imitating Trinity's famous jump-kick from *The Matrix*. Sure, you can adjust elements of your network settings—packet rate and size and whatnot—but this is very advanced stuff, and the default settings for 56K and DSL/LAN are no guarantee of a stable connection.

Artificial Imbecility

I feel a little weird calling out what might be the lamest thing about TRIBES 2, because it's not central to the game and most TRIBES fans don't need it to enjoy online play. But here goes: It's the separate Solo and LAN play options that let you play a short single-player "training" campaign, or play any of the gameplay types with a group of computer-controlled bots. Both smack of afterthoughts, and are so shoddy they really don't deserve consideration. I'll be quick and brutal: The training missions didn't train me to do anything and the bots are just set up to run waypoints—and they're not even on all the maps. Once I realized that I couldn't get the bots to do what I say or use vehicles with me, I stopped using them. While these modes are unnecessary, done right they would have created a whole new side to TRIBES and provided easier entry to the game universe for newbies. nstead, LAN and Solo play are completely disposable.

You Gotta Believe

As you can tell, I really wanted TRIBES 2 to be great, and I believe it still can be. Its fate is now in the hands of its gaming community. Patches can and will continue to flow, but what this game really needs to survive is a healthy mod community, and Sierra's decision to make the engine available to anyone for $100 (you just have to publish your mod through Sierra) should encourage that. TRIBES 2 was supposed to be the be-all, end-all of team-based multiplayer action games. Right now, my fingers are crossed so hard for HALO that my knuckles are bleeding. CGW

UNDER THE SEA One of the new features of TRIBES 2 is the ability to play underwater.





TANKS FOR THE MEMORIES Being the turret man in a hover-tank is fun. I just wish the weapons were cooler than a mounted mortar and machine gun—two weapons I could carry around as a heavily-armored foot soldier as well.

Poverty, comedy, and strategy meet in a fun city-builder by the sea

SimCiudad

TROPICO is a flavorful dish loaded with ingredients, a Jamaican jambalaya of SIMCITY and SIMTHEME PARK simmered with tropical fruit, rum, and the zest of two dozen crackpot dictators. It's a sumptuous feast for the senses, with a soundtrack that deserves an award, but it may not be to everyone's taste. Even those who really enjoy it will probably find themselves hungering for more.

TROPICO

reviewed by Ken Brown

Top Banana

You play one of 25 historical dictators such as Fidel Castro, Anastasio Somoza, Manuel Noriega, or Papa Doc Duvalier. Or, you can create your own. Every ruler has strengths and weaknesses, more prestige with certain factions, and two ugly flaws. Your leader's impressive route to power—say, he's a self-made man—can be outweighed by him being a cowardly moron. Diplomatic relations also are affected by flaws such as alcoholism, which the Soviets find endearing but the Americans disdain.

You set the victory conditions, from open-ended to a short reign for maximum personal gain. There are no campaigns, so the heart of the game is its Random Map play. You can toggle an assortment of starting conditions, or play one of eight different scenarios, but the majority of games play out in a similar fashion. Unlike SIMCITY, from which TROPICO heavily derives, there are few overall strategies with which to build the ultimate island. There are also no scripted events or crucial gameplay points like SIMCITY's natural disasters to create a sense of urgency. This didn't affect my enjoyment of the game, but it may make the experience less compelling for those who expect more.

Random Map games typically start in 1950, with 20 peasants scratching out a meager living on an undeveloped island. You've got a beautiful mansion and $10,000 in the treasury. Your goal: Provide food, housing, medical care, education, jobs, and entertainment to these peasants and their progeny, while growing the economy and skimming some profits for numero uno. It's a juggling act that starts out easy, but often winds up in rebellion.

There are dozens of structures you can build; all are beautifully detailed. Some, like churches and schools, will never make a dime, but they meet important needs. Others, like hotels and factories, can be a big source of profit. It's easy to tell if you have enough money to place a building; it's another thing to tell how long it will take. Construction workers must first level the ground, and for a large structure like a stadium or cathedral, that can take years. You can play a full game without ever seeing progress on your airport. You can hire more construction workers, but it would be nice to have an idea of the human-hours involved before undertaking construction.



BEACHED Tourists love beach houses, which is good, because dictators love tourists.

The Little People

Buildings, by themselves, accomplish nothing. You need workers to make rum and cigars, priests to take confession, reporters to cover the news, and generals to train your soldiers. Unfortunately, early on almost none of these are available. You'll often resort to paying a big recruiting fee to attract them. Once you've built a high school and university the need begins to lessen.

Over time, as families beget new Tropicans and freighters disgorge new immigrants, the population will boom. These people help fill in the labor pool, but they also put more pressure on the economy and environment. Clicking on an individual reveals their needs and level of satisfaction. If you want, you can learn all about their family, occupation, income level, and more. The individuality of each person and the fascinating social web help give the game its unique charm.

But you can't click on 100 citizens every few minutes to see what they're thinking. Several buttons on the interface reveal the population's satisfaction in terms of housing, food, liberty, entertainment, and so

CGW RATED



PROS

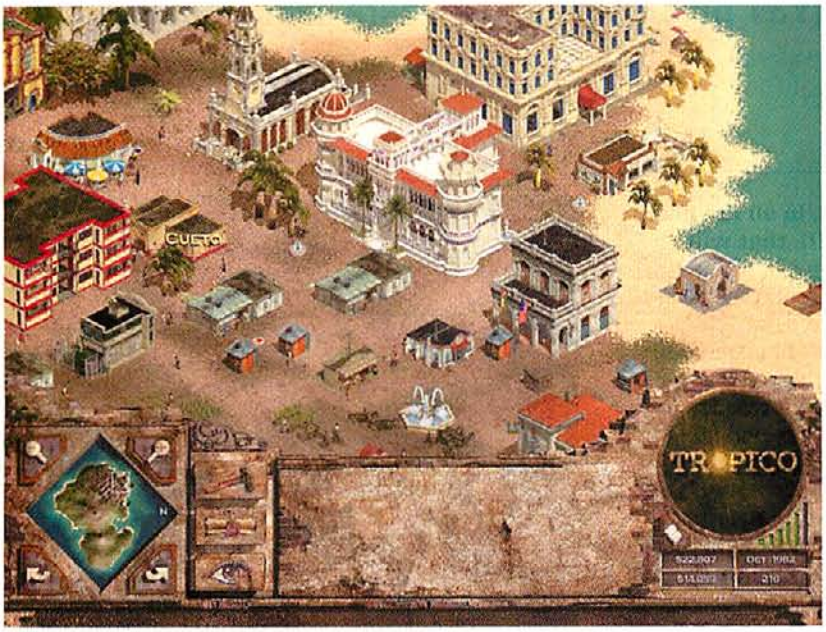
More fun than a weeklong Caribbean cruise, for $1,500 less. Better music, too.

CONS

After that week, you'll grow bored with the island life and want to go home.

Requirements: Pentium 233 MMX or faster, 32MB RAM, 820MB hard drive space. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium-II 300, 64MB RAM. **3D Support:** None **Multiplayer:** None

Publisher: Gathering of Developers • Developer: PopTop Software • $40 • www.poptop.com ESRB Rating: Teen; violence, suggestive themes.



ISLAND TYCOON TROPICO mixes themes of wealth, poverty, agriculture, and growth in its sun-soaked, Caribbean-style graphics.



AIRBORNE EXPRESS The airport takes forever to build, but it opens new avenues for tourism and diplomacy.

on. You'll spend much of the game bouncing through this menu to monitor your people's needs; unfortunately, there are no hot-keys for this.

If you lag behind, you'll get letters complaining about a lack of infrastructure. Spoken comments from your advisor are more interesting, such as: "El presidente, your people starve. Grow more food!" or "The people no longer seem satisfied staring at the grass. They need entertainment." Other than that, you'll have no interaction with the citizenry, which can result in a sense of detachment.

Each year a fat almanac lands on your desk to snap you back to "reality." This gives you a complete summary of the population's happiness level and the financial particulars of the island, and breaks the information down as much as you want. It's a wonderfully detailed resource that helps you to track various trends.

Politics

Every eight years your people like to feel as if they can make a change. Early on, when you're idealistic and socially conscious, you'll have no problem being re-elected. Later, while you're jailing malcontents and stashing money in an offshore account, it gets trickier. Unfortunately, the game doesn't tell you how you stand in the polls until you agree to the election. If you hold the election against a popular candidate, you can rig it with little consequence.

What's surprising is that if you cancel the election, almost nothing happens as a result. You'll get a letter saying the people are shocked, and your democracy rating will plummet, but I expected greater consequences for alienating the electorate. If your popularity drops too far, rebellions can result in you being thrown out of office. But they don't have the urgency of, say, Godzilla rampaging through town or a Hurricane blowing down half your village.

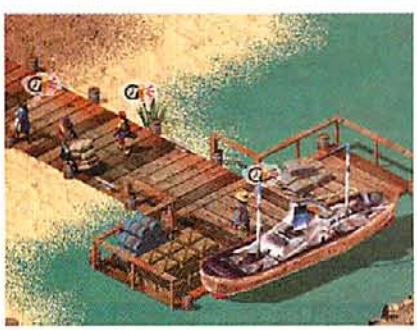
Insurrections are nevertheless fun to watch. Agitated Tropicans run through the streets with erupting volcano symbols over their heads. Even if they're not successful in ousting you, they're very effective in clearing out the hotels and beach houses. Yanqui tourists tend to make themselves scarce when shots are being fired.

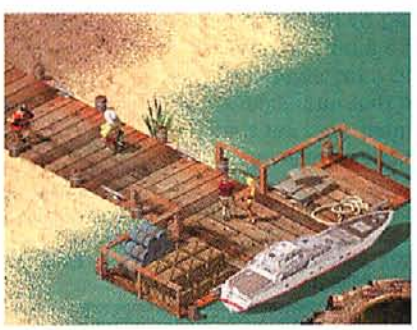
Several other factors also play a role in the political picture. You can issue edicts to offer amnesty to rebels, improve literacy, double the food rations, and clean up the environment. You can also use diplomacy to curry favor with the United States or Russia. Each of these actions has an effect, but it's not as noticeable as you might expect.

If you play it right and survive for 50 years, you'll get a nice rally in front of the presidential palace. If not, you'll be saying adios from the back of a dory shoved out to sea.

Come Back Next Year

TROPICO is entertaining, with a clever sense of humor and a ton of charm. It will appeal to anyone who enjoys a light-hearted city builder with social and political themes, but I wish it offered a greater variety of challenges, and perhaps some scripted events like hurricanes or volcanoes to add more surprises. But for the time that you're basking in its radiant beauty, turning dirt into dinero and grooving to its Calypso beat, it's a great vacation from reality. CGW





FRESH OFF THE BOAT Freighters and tour boats frequently drop off fresh arrivals and take away exports. Graphical touches like these are abundant throughout the game.

Old friends return in MYST III: EXILE, but the years haven't been kind

Myst Me?

MYST III: EXILE

reviewed by Charles Ardai

There is exactly one moment, in all the hours it takes to complete MYST III, that will make your heart race. You've just spent a number of those hours wandering around the island of Amateria, manipulating dials, levers, wheels, gears, and springs to configure a sort of mammoth, island-wide Rube Goldberg contraption so that giant balls of ice launched at one end make it through to the other without smashing to bits or rolling off into the sea. You've gotten the fulcrums and counterweights set just so; you've put the pegs in the right holes and tuned the "resonance rings" to the right frequencies. You've made it to the last room of the level, where a vinyl-upholstered chair tempts you to rest for a moment. So you sit down and fiddle a bit with the controls. Suddenly a spherical crust of ice forms around you and—whammo!—you're launched like a pinball into the very contraption you've just spent hours setting up.

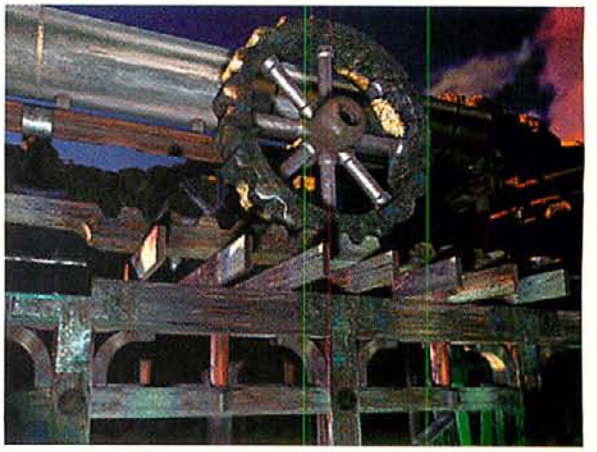
The extended animated sequence that follows fills you with a sense of elation and accomplishment. All that annoying, apparently arbitrary busywork the game made you do wasn't a complete waste of time after all! And aside from that, who doesn't enjoy a first-person ride on what is basically a really snazzy roller coaster? It's a genuine reward for your labors, and almost makes the hours you spent earning the reward worth it.

Almost—but not quite. Alas, a half-minute of animation, however visually spiffy and conceptually clever, is scant payback for hours of grueling, mind-numbing labor. And while there are other animations in the game, they're only occasionally this spiffy and nowhere near this clever. There also aren't enough of them: Playing MYST III is like eating a bowl of raisin bran with too few raisins and far too much bran.

Sweet MYST III of Life

I realize, of course, any game bearing the MYST name is basically critic-proof. Like Adam Sandler movies or those awful romantic suspense novels Mary Higgins Clark keeps selling by the million, MYST games have a built-in audience, and nothing a reviewer might say will dissuade that audience from buying the next one. But that doesn't stop an honest reviewer from trying.

The fact is that MYST III is, in the most literal sense, a stunning disappointment. The game is stunning, but in every other regard it is a disappointment. I like pretty picture-postcard vistas as much as anyone, and yes, my jaw dropped when I saw some of the sweet images the folks at Presto Studios have crammed into this game. Stunning sunsets, gorgeous clouds, rough-hewn stones covered with eerie green moss, monumental buildings decorated with all sorts of baroque designs—the visual splendor is almost too rich, like a cake so intensely delicious you can't stand to take a second bite.



TWIDDLE ME THIS Gears, levers, and wheels—some community colleges are now granting Mechanical Engineering 101 credit for anyone completing MYST III: EXILE.

MYST the Mark

There are, of course, a number of ways in which an adventure game's gameplay can be weak. The controls might be awkward and not much fun to use; the puzzles might be unoriginal or repetitive; a poorly laid-out environment may force you to backtrack repeatedly; the story might be arcane and



READ ALL ABOUT IT Sure it's beautifully textured, but if you really feel like reading a story, there's this crazy new invention called A Book that is a much better medium for reading than a computer game.

CGW RATED

PROS

Crisp, attractive graphics; one really nice animated sequence.

CONS

Tiresome gameplay; endless mechanical puzzles; an uninteresting story; bad acting.

Requirements: Pentium-II 233, 64MB RAM, 200MB hard drive space. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium III, 128MB RAM, 2.2GB hard drive space. **3D Support:** Direct3D **Multiplayer:** None

Publisher: UbiSoft Entertainment • Developer: Presto Studios • $50 • www.myst3.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone



SCREEN SAVERS If MYST III has any saving grace, it is the brand's continuing excellence in graphical splendor.



WILD WILDLIFE You'll find lots of details to catch your eye—like this bizarre fish—throughout the worlds of MYST III.

uninvolving; or the actors might be such embarrassing scenery-chewers as to rob the player of any desire to make it to the next cut-scene. I am sorry to report that MYST III is bad in all of these ways.

The controls are one step up from those of the original MYST, since instead of seeing the game as a slideshow-like succession of still pictures you can now pan freely left and right and up and down at every location. Unfortunately, you still move from location to location in discrete slideshow-like steps, so the game is still a matter of lurching about, only now you have some dizzying looking around to do between lurches.

This is especially noticeable when you have to make your way down a corridor or along a catwalk. Instead of just holding down a forward-motion key as you would in any normal, modern game, you have to click your mouse button maybe 5 or 10 or 20 times in order to inch along in dainty little steps separated by annoying pauses during which you often have to adjust your cursor before you can click again. Making matters worse, the cursor doesn't change to indicate when it is over a spot you can click on if you want to move. And since the visuals don't always make it clear just when you can go in a given direction, playing the game involves a lot of hunting and clicking and hunting some more until you find your way, painstakingly.

So much for the controls. The puzzles are almost all of the "set four dials" or "set three levers" or "set two gears" variety. It's bad enough that most adventure games have some boring filler puzzles of this pen-and-paper brainteaser variety: MYST III basically has nothing else. In the forest world of Edanna the puzzles are a little more story-driven and less mechanical, but only a little: What, after all, is the difference between angling seven reflectors mounted on poles to redirect a ray of sunlight (as you do on the isle of J'nanin) and angling four "reflective orchids" to achieve the same result on Edanna? MYST III is all about making tedious adjustments—lots of them—to one mechanical system after another. This isn't a game, it's an exercise in mechanical engineering.



THROW AWAY THE KEY Brad Dourif begs for release from Acting Jail. His shrill, overly dramatic pleas fall upon deaf ears.

And what of the story and the acting? I was never able to figure out the former, I'm afraid, though not for lack of trying. The game swamps you in exposition—lots of names to remember, lots of arcane MYST lore—often presented through pages of on-screen text. The plot seems to revolve around an attempt by a refugee from a destroyed world to make the father of the boys who destroyed the world suffer for his sons' sins. The father is the venerable Atrus, played like a nebbishy cross between William H. Macy and Fred MacMurray by one of the original creators of MYST, Rand Miller. But before you jump to the conclusion that it is this ex-programmer's acting I found most objectionable, let me reassure you that Mr. Miller is Lawrence Olivier and Anthony Hopkins rolled up into one compared to the villain of the piece, played with mortifying talentlessness by Academy Award nominee Brad Dourif.

Poor Brad Dourif! Once upon a time, he was in pictures like *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*; more recently, though, he's been relegated to installments of the *Child's Play* and *Critters* franchises, and seeing him in MYST III tells you why. His Shatner-ian declamations reach a climax at the finale when he howls "No! No! No, no, no, no, no!" while wearing a gold-fringed tablecloth and waving a Flintstones-style rock hammer. There are, I'm afraid, sadder stories in Hollywood than Robert Downey, Jr.'s.

MYST Opportunity

Similarly, there are sadder stories in the world of computer games than that of MYST III. It's not an awful game, just a bad one that could and should have been better.

All the talent that went into this game, all the time and money, all the hopes and expectations of an adoring fan base, and then what comes out is this clumsy and tiresome bit of nothing with only some pretty visuals and one inspired bit of animation to recommend it?

What a waste. CGW

BLUE SHIFT is an exhilarating three minutes

Blue Shift Special

In a genre filled with design akin to nuclear explosions, it's nice to get a game designed like a laser. Instead of a sprawling epic that attempts to hit every nerve of your being with the biggest blast possible, in BLUE SHIFT you get sharp, pointed, focused gameplay. Mince no words: This is the expansion that OPPOSING FORCE should have been. It's a quick-fix, run-and-gun adventure with fascinating levels, dashing visuals, and a lack of inane and underwhelming bosses. It helps flesh out the HALF-LIFE universe, and adds a new slant or two to the entire Gordon Freeman story.

A Barney of One

BLUE SHIFT is a single-player adventure in which the events of the original HALF-LIFE unfold before you, but this time you're Calhoun, just another security guard (or Barney) who works in another section of the Black Mesa facility. One of the problems with OPPOSING FORCE (OP FOR) was that you didn't feel like you were in Freeman's world; you saw Freeman once, and that was it. The game felt more like a disconnected anecdote than a differing perspective. Conversely, BLUE SHIFT's plot and dialogue make it more of a *Rashomon*-style reinterpretation of the central event.

HALF-LIFE: BLUE SHIFT

reviewed by Thierry Nguyen

Chronologically, BLUE SHIFT starts where HALF-LIFE starts, at the beginning of a long day at Black Mesa. It's divided into six "episodes," which amount to around six hours of gameplay. During these hours, you'll be rescuing scientists, making stopovers in Xen, and beating the military at its own game. Your objective is similar to Freeman's: Get out of Black Mesa and save your own butt.

Besides the new storyline, BLUE SHIFT brings new hi-res graphics that improve the looks of everything from the character models to the toxic-waste-splattered walls. Now the game looks more like a 2001 title and less like something from 1998. The new detail on the weapons and characters is such a shocking change that I started replaying the original HALF-LIFE just to see it in modern graphical splendor. That's it for the new stuff though—there aren't any new toys or baddies you haven't seen before.

What's an expansion pack without new weapons or enemies? One that focuses on gameplay. Lacking useless and gimmicky new items, BLUE SHIFT instead delivers better levels and more interesting puzzles. The scripted events, ranging from a tram crash to watching scientists get cut down by aliens, are up to the level of such events in the original HALF-LIFE. There's genuine tension here, whether you're surviving a plunge in a falling elevator or hearing marines trying to break into the same room you're trying to escape from. Even the scripted dialogue manages to be interesting this time. There's a great scene involving a scientist working on a massive machine: He's explaining everything he's doing, and somehow, I was honest-to-god interested in what he had to say. Finally, near the end, there's a great Freeman sighting that's leagues better than OP FOR's "watch Gordon jump into the portal." Like HALF-LIFE, BLUE SHIFT has moments more reminiscent of action movies than of computer games.



DR. ZAIUS, DR. ZAIUS The new textures on the people really add to the game. This important scientist NPC looks leagues better than his original colleagues.

Best Three Minutes Ever

If HALF-LIFE was the amazing debut album, then BLUE SHIFT is the follow-up hit single. It's short, it's focused, and it keeps you enthralled during its brief lifespan. Its main imperfection is length. I managed to finish the whole episode in one night. If you're going to put out a single-player experience, its price should match its duration. The inclusion of OP FOR and its CTF maps is nice, but if you already have OP FOR installed, the value for money diminishes quite a bit.

Still, BLUE SHIFT is a great ride, and the updating of the graphics makes HALF-LIFE a lot more appealing. If you enjoyed HALF-LIFE at all, you'll probably want to pick this one up. CGW

CGW RATED



PROS

It's the expansion pack that OP FOR should have been.

CONS

It's over faster than you can say "TFC"; not quite enough meat for HALF-LIFE fanatics.

Requirements: Pentium 233 MMX or faster, 32MB RAM, 270MB hard drive space. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium-II 300 or faster, 64MB RAM, 510MB hard drive space, 4MB SVGA video card. **3D Support:** OpenGL, Direct 3D. **Multiplayer:** LAN, Internet (2–16 players).

Publisher: Sierra Studios • Developer: Gearbox Software • $25 • gearboxsoftware.com • ESRB Rating: Teen (13+); animated blood, gore, and violence.

KOHAN: IMMORTAL SOVEREIGNS—
two great tastes that taste great together

It's Two, Two, Two Games in One

KOHAN: IMMORTAL SOVEREIGNS

reviewed by Elliott Chin

There are real-time strategy games and there are turn-based strategy games, and never the twain shall meet. Strategy First and TimeGate Studios have done the unthinkable: They've made a real-time strategy game that plays like a turn-based game. This might seem unpromising, but in KOHAN: IMMORTAL SOVEREIGNS, the mixture is surprisingly fun and innovative.

KOHAN does not play like any other real-time strategy game: You don't have peons, you don't harvest resources, and you don't lay down dozens of buildings. Instead, your base is a single city, with slots for new structures. Four of the game's five resources are generated by structures you build in your city, while gold is generated steadily by the city itself. The more upgraded your city, the more revenue created. If you need more resources or gold (and you will, because every army you create has an upkeep cost) you'll need to conquer other cities.

The tech tree is pretty flat, not drawn out with dozens of buildings and upgrades. Aside from the resource buildings, you can build markets, barracks, temples, libraries, and walls. Barracks enable the heavy units, such as cavalry, while temples and libraries enable the special units, such as clerics and wizards. Every unit comes out already knowing its few special abilities; refreshingly, the units require no micromanagement.

As in HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC, you organize your troops under commanders. All the units in KOHAN are arranged into small companies, consisting of four regular units and two support units. You don't ever command a single unit, but instead issue orders through the company. The strategy comes in configuring your companies, and with the many types of support units, you can come up with a variety of interesting combinations. When you create a new company, you can mix and match to include, say, cavalry with clerics for healing, or cavalry with wizards for extra firepower. Once that is finished, you assign a captain to the company. This captain can be one of the Kohan—the immortals of the game's title. They are heroes with special abilities, and not only do they gain experience and power, but they impart bonuses to your companies, too.

In combat, the strategic exploitation of terrain, formations, and your company configurations is crucial. KOHAN makes ingenious use of zones to help you play the game. Each company has a zone of control, which you see as a yellow box around the unit. Any time the zones of opposing companies touch, they battle automatically. Once fighting begins, you can't disengage your company unless you signal it to retreat. The game also employs zones of supply which radiate out from your cities. Companies that suffer losses can replace their fallen comrades only when in a zone of supply. The intelligent manipulation of zones gives the game its turn-based feel: With companies not immediately charging until their zones overlap, you are afforded the time to set up and execute more complicated offensive and defensive maneuvers.

KOHAN is more strategic than tactical, abstracting many of the conventions of real-time strategy games, such as city building, resource harvesting, and even combat. This is as close to a classic turn-based strategy game as you can get without actually changing the real-time format. The game is easy to learn, and the extensive tutorials are great at showing you how to play. The campaign is generally challenging, though it can get boring at times. But the core game is fascinating, and as a fantasy game, KOHAN offers such goodies as wandering monsters and magic items that improve your units.

KOHAN: IMMORTAL SOVEREIGNS is a simple game, lacking the complexity of an AGE OF EMPIRES II, but its blend of old and new comes together in a very satisfying package. CGW



ZONED OUT Combat is governed by zones of control, delineated by colored boxes around companies, that free you from micromanaging individual units.

CGW RATED



PROS

Gameplay successfully marries the strongest aspects of real-time and turn-based tactical strategy.

CONS

In spite of its challenges, the campaign can be rather dull.

Requirements: Pentium-II 300, 64MB RAM, 150MB hard drive space. **Recommended Requirements:** Same **3D Support:** None **Multiplayer:** LAN, Internet (2–8 players).

Publisher: Strategy First • **Developer:** TimeGate Studios • **$45** • **www.kohan.net** • **ESRB Rating:** Everyone; animated blood and violence.

Toga! Toga! Toga!

My Sims Want to Party All the Time!

THE SIMS has always lacked one key thing, and that thing is mimes. I've said from day one that if there's anything wrong with THE SIMS, it's the serious, almost criminal absence of in-game mimes.

Thankfully, with THE SIMS: HOUSE PARTY EXPANSION PACK, your mime deficiencies will vanish like so many gerbil-infected Sims. The meat of this expansion pack is exactly what you'd expect: more chairs, tables, dressers, and doodads for your Sims to interact with. Unlike LIVIN' LARGE, however, the focus here is on group activities rather than random chance items, such as the slot machine or chemistry table.

THE SIMS: HOUSE PARTY

reviewed by Alex Handy

Three's Company

These group activities include some rather creative new Sim hobbies. Among the more than 100 new items (including the previously *CGW*-exclusive birthday cake), your Sims will enjoy playing with turntables, riding a mechanical bull, sitting around the campfire singing "um-bly-ka," and even blowing bubbles on the cleverly disguised hookah. These items tend to fall into one of three new motifs: tiki, disco/rave, and country/western.

As you'd expect, each of these motifs comes with new wallpaper, floor tiles, lamps, and art to help create the perfect ambiance in your house. For the tiki lovers, there are giant stone heads, lots of bamboo furniture, and a shower. For the more rustic families, such as my Babler family (which has an outhouse and a refrigerator on the front lawn) there are cowskin chairs, hay bales to sit on, and even a new bar for making the perfect Sim Long Island iced tea.

Mummenschanz

Of course, the focus of HOUSE PARTY is (duh) parties! And oh, the different types of parties you can have. With the two turntables (no microphone) you can set up all sorts of dance parties. Your Sims will even dance according to the tunes being played. Country music elicits line dancing, while disco causes your Sims to boogie-oogie-oogie.

And to get your Sims into the full swing of things, there's a costume trunk that contains about 500 new skins for your little people. Everything from togas to Hawaiian shirts are in the trunk, and when one Sim changes clothes, the rest will head over and switch to the same attire.

But what if your Sim party begins to Sim stink? The mime shows up! Nothing makes partygoers happier than a mime, right? Well, either a mime or Drew Carey (yep, the portly comic makes a cameo).

HOUSE PARTY may be just another package of toys for your Sims, but every one of the new items is well designed and highly useful for creating the perfect feel for your Sim homes. The pack even includes 20-plus new songs for your dancing pleasure. And yes, all the lyrics are in Sim speak. HOUSE PARTY is by far the best way to increase your Sims' social ratings, albeit at the expense of yours in real life. *CGW*



SURPRISE! In honor of Jeff Green's promotion, the *CGW* edit staff splurges on a male stripper–filled cake. We are fired almost immediately thereafter.



BOOGIE DOWN My new boss and Managing Editor Holly Fleming, the only *CGW* staffers to survive the purge, celebrate the absence of editorial rabble. Note the groovy glow-stick necklaces on Holly.

CGW RATED

PROS
More Sim stuff.

CONS
Mimes.

Requirements: THE SIMS, Pentium-II 233, 32MB RAM, 255MB hard drive space. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium-II 350, 64MB RAM.
3D Support: Direct3D **Multiplayer:** None

Publisher: Electronic Arts • Developer: Maxis • $30 • www.thesims.com • ESRB Rating: Teen; comic mischief, mature sexual themes, mild animated violence.

SERIOUS SAM is Croatian, it's old school, and it'll kick your ass

DOOM 2001

SERIOUS SAM
reviewed by Jeff Green

If SERIOUS SAM proves one thing, it's this: Game magazine writers are idiots.

Blame it on HALF-LIFE. For the past few years, we've convinced ourselves (and many designers, too) that Valve's landmark shooter had permanently upped the ante. There was no going back to a simple "kill 'em all" kind of action game. We began demanding more realistic environments, more story, more complexity. The genre had matured.

So thank goodness for SERIOUS SAM, a budget-priced first-person shooter from Croatian developer Croteam (published by G.O.D.) that gives us the cold slap in the face we've needed. With its aggressively unapologetic, blatantly old-school, DOOM-style gameplay—kill monsters, find secrets, and blaze through as fast as you can—SERIOUS SAM is a not-so-serious reminder that all we really need is this: a game that's fun to play.



MAD MONSTER PARTY SERIOUS SAM keeps the action fast and furious, with a steady stream of tough, scary monsters always on the attack.

Die, Monsters, Die!

True to its DOOM-style roots, SERIOUS SAM has a story, but it doesn't remotely matter. As Sam "Serious" Stone, muscle-bound monster killer, you are sent back in time to ancient Egypt to destroy an alien race from another dimension that threatens to take over the galaxy. But...whatever. The ancient Egypt motif is an excuse to craft very cool-looking levels—simply huge, open killing grounds for you to do battle against hordes upon hordes of aliens.

Did I say hordes? That doesn't do it justice. SERIOUS SAM has more monsters in it than any other shooter I've played. In the absence of a sophisticated AI, SERIOUS SAM does the next best thing: It assaults you with sheer force of numbers. At times, especially late in the game, there are hundreds of monsters onscreen at once, surrounding you and charging at full speed. You're going to run backward, circle-strafe, and fire from beginning to end. It is terrifying, exhausting, and exhilarating.

The monsters themselves are all memorable and extremely well designed, capable of a variety of attacks at long or close range (many creatures can do both). You'll laugh the first time you see most of them, then spend the rest of the game despising them. Among the highlights are the beheaded kamikazes, headless humanoids who charge you, screaming, and detonate bombs as they close in; the werebulls, huge bull-like creatures that charge and hurl you for major damage; and the kleer skeletons, which assault from afar with projectiles and lunge scarily when close. It's major testament to Croteam's creativity that they've made frogs scary—especially when they swarm at you by the hundreds inside a locked room.

At times, it's almost too much, and unless you are particularly great, I'd recommend playing on an easy setting. I played on Normal and regretted it, and I admit to switching on God Mode in a couple places—the run to the Pyramid at the end, for one—just to get by (and even then it took a while.)

From Croatia With Love

Croteam fashioned a proprietary 3D engine for SERIOUS SAM, and it is quite good. Large, open outdoor spaces such as sand dunes and an oasis are beautifully rendered, in both day and night settings, with nice effects like shimmering water and sun flares that make the environments feel alive. The "Egyptian" architecture is dramatic and gigantic, dwarfing you at times, while the monsters pursuing you are all superbly animated. This may be a belated, glorified DOOM clone, but graphically, it's light years ahead.

And don't think I mean "DOOM clone" pejoratively. This is a compliment. SERIOUS SAM succeeds because it reminds us of what made that game such a classic in the first place, and does so with large doses of humor and creativity. It's a breath of fresh air—the kind of game you play when every other game bores you. It's a shot of pure adrenaline, straight up, and it's the most brainlessly pure-fun game released so far this year. CGW

CGW RATED



PROS
Non-stop, fast-paced, no-frills FPS mayhem; great monsters and weapons.

CONS
Ridiculously tough at times.

Requirements: Pentium-II 300, Celeron-A 300, or AMD K6-3 400; 64MB RAM, 150MB hard drive space.
Recommended Requirements: Pentium-III 550, 128MB RAM, 450MB hard drive space, GeForce 256. **3D Support:** OpenGL
Multiplayer: Internet, LAN, split-screen mode.

Publisher: Gathering of Developers • Developer: Croteam • $20 • www.godgames.com
ESRB Rating: Mature; violence, blood, and gore.

FATE OF THE DRAGON offsets its good design choices with bad ones

Bad Karma

While Rome was struggling with the effects of having a mad emperor at the helm (Commodus, much nuttier than portrayed in *Gladiator*), the Han Dynasty of China collapsed, and three kingdoms sprang up in its wake. Most of the century was then dominated by tales of political intrigue, sheer heroism, and fellows wielding weapons with names like Black Dragon. Yet the strategy genre has largely ignored this fascinating setting. For a long time, the ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS series of games from Koei was the only outlet for gamers wanting to relive the roles of Cao Cao or Liu Bei. Well, now there's FATE OF THE DRAGON.

FATE OF THE DRAGON

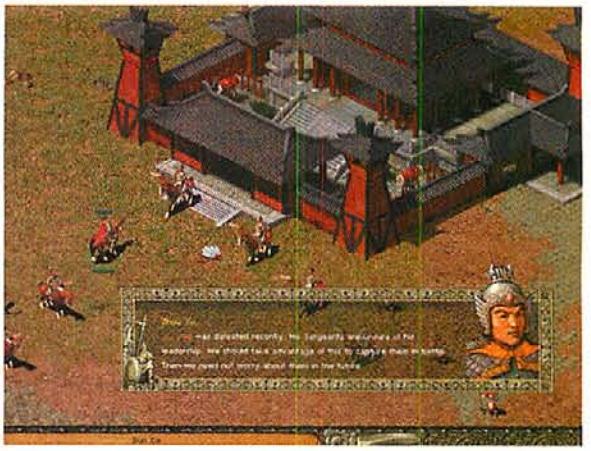
reviewed by Thierry Nguyen

At first glance, FATE looks like AGE OF EMPIRES; it initially seems to play like AOE. Click to create peasants. Send peasants to grab resources. Build structures to gain military units. Create military units. Have said units flitter across the map, and kill those who do not flash your flag. Repeat.

Yet the economics model, in addition to other changes, help to distinguish the game from being a shameless AOE clone. There's a head-spinning total of seven resources to manage here: Wood, iron, corn, and raw meat must be harvested; food and wine must be produced and then stored; and gold must be earned. Additionally, your soldiers need food and wine out in the field; if they're not well supplied, they grow weaker. So you also need to set up supply lines to the troops. Needless to say, establishing your hold on the resources is a dizzying act of mass clickery at first.

Other things that make this game new and different: You train peasants to become soldiers, rather than crank them out of some building. There are two separate views, for managing the individual cities and your overall territory. And there are disasters (famines, earthquakes, locusts, filthy bandits), which you can counter by conducting sacrifices.

But then a massive sense of game-design karma steps in, as whatever new elements FATE introduces are soon opposed by several annoyances. There are a whopping three units. Okay, there's quite a bit of siege equipment (two kinds of catapults, a wall-scaling ladder, a troop transport, a recon unit, and a supply wagon), and there are heroes. But manpower-wise, you have only pikemen, swordsmen, and archers. You can mount each of these units on horses, but that just makes them faster and tougher to kill, because the horse dies before its mount.



STAY A WHILE, AND LISTEN Story elements are limited to little voiceovers and text briefings, hence the distinct lack of drama.

Being limited to three core units might have been interesting, were the AI up to the task. But the AI tends to simply attack you at the gate. Or out in the open field, which isn't very interesting either. There's one basic tile set, "green China," and it's used throughout the entire game. Finally, any possible use of tactics with the three units gets shot down when you realize you can't make formations.

The saddest mistake is the lack of narrative. There's a reason why this period in history is written about and adored by its enthusiasts: It's an interesting story. Larger-than-life heroes assassinating or double-crossing each other should have provided for a strong narrative. What you get instead is some standard "kill everything" scenarios, peppered with overacted voiceovers. What's almost criminal about the game is the way the bland text briefings containing the meat of the story mention great ideas for scenarios that aren't in the game. Several times I read about a key event only to find myself asked to occupy another province.

The new elements introduced in FATE OF THE DRAGON are quickly overshadowed by its myriad annoyances. It really ends up being just another real-time-strategy game, except that all the people in it are Chinese. If you want a great strategy game about the Three Kingdoms period, hunt down the original Koei games instead. CGW

CGW RATED

PROS

It uses a fascinating time period and adds interesting strategy elements...

CONS

...but for the most part, it feels like playing the Chinese in AGE OF EMPIRES II.

Requirements: Pentium 233 MMX, 32MB RAM, 270MB hard drive space. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium-II 300, 64MB RAM, 510MB hard drive space, 8X CD-ROM, 4MB SVGA video card. **3D Support:** None **Multiplayer:** LAN, Internet (2–4 players).

Publisher: Eidos Interactive • Developer: Object Software • $40 • www.fateofthedragon.com • ESRB Rating: Teen (13+); animated blood, gore, and violence.

SUMMONER is four RPGs in one convenient package

Mixmaster Deluxe

It's got the hack-'n'-slash joy of DIABLO and the complex story of FINAL FANTASY. It's got lots of quests as in BALDUR'S GATE II. And the graphics? They're 3D, just like EVERQUEST's. Put all these elements together and you've got SUMMONER, a gigantic action RPG that lives up to its ambition.



ICE PRISON Some of the graphics in the game are amazing, especially spell effects such as this ice prison spell.

SUMMONER
reviewed by Elliott Chin

Time to Save the World...Again

Okay, so SUMMONER has a clichéd intro—town wiped out and burned by bad guys—but as you progress you'll find a richly developed gameworld and some surprising story twists. Sometimes the game overwhelms you with backstory, but there is no question that the story is complex and deep. The main quests are very straightforward and the game offers plenty of mini quests to let you earn extra experience and treasure. Unfortunately, the mini quests can be hard to keep track of because the game's quest journal is a joke. It gives you the barest amount of information and often doesn't track quest location, nor does it log completed quests.

For a game with such sweeping scope, the world map doesn't have many places to visit, but every city is packed with huge environments and NPCs. Some of the locales have incredibly elaborate and colorful architecture. The Temple of Urath, for instance, is beautiful to behold. In unfortunate contrast, the NPCs and ambient characters are bland and obviously drawn from a very limited selection of models, a flaw that extends to the monsters. There isn't a great variety of monsters, either—at level 15, I was fighting the same ones I had killed at level 2.

The levels, while large, are sometimes mazelike and difficult to navigate. The overhead map helps a bit, but it could have used more features, such as the ability to drop in notes, zoom in or out, and hop to previously explored areas.

Chain Gang

What really locks you into SUMMONER is the combat. As in DIABLO, you simply click on the enemy and your character attacks. Unlike in DIABLO, though, well-timed mouse-clicking can lead to chain attacks. It works like this: When your character attacks, you get a brief chance to follow up with another attack if you time the click right. If you succeed, you can launch another attack, and so on. The chains are hard to pull off, but the payoff is dramatic: You can inflict extra damage, disrupt the enemy's attack, leech off health, and more.

Although you can have up to five characters in your party, you control only one at a time. While you might miss the total party control you'd enjoy in a game like BALDUR'S GATE II, limiting you to a single character is a wise design move as it makes SUMMONER's action-focused combat manageable and fluid. Other party members simply follow your lead and are AI controlled, but you can give them scripts to follow so that they act as, say, spellcasters or melee attackers. The AI is basically good, but more script customization—the ability to specify favorite spells, for example—would have been welcome.

SUMMONER is stingy with player characters but does a good job of differentiating the familiar fantasy archetypes of thief, fighter, and wizard. Each class has unique skills and spells that make it fun, though the fighter is by far the least interesting. And each character has a good-size list of spell schools and skills to choose from when you level up, giving this game an excellent sense of character growth. The graphics are good, and the spell effects are great to look at, but the forced camera angles sometimes don't let you see enough of the environment. I also experienced some pop-up and sound looping.

The problems in SUMMONER, however, aren't enough to detract from an overall good experience. The combat is engaging, the story is interesting, the game is fun, and there's even multiplayer support for dungeon hacking over THQ's dedicated servers. Even with its flaws, SUMMONER ends up being a very enjoyable role-playing experience. CGW

CGW RATED

PROS
Innovative combat; lots of character growth; rich story; well-developed gameworld; good graphics.

CONS
Poor quest journal; limited number of character and monster models; poor overhead map; too much walking; limited number of save-game slots; some bugs.

Requirements: Pentium II or K6-2 400, 64MB RAM, 800MB hard drive space. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium III or K6-2 500, 128MB RAM, 1.3GB hard drive space. **3D Support:** DirectX, Glide. **Multiplayer:** LAN, Internet (2–4 players).

Publisher: THQ • Developer: Volition • $50 • www.summoner.com • ESRB Rating: Teen: blood and violence.

Origin and ULTIMA ONLINE go out with a whimper

Sun Sets on THIRD DAWN

You would be hard pressed to find a bigger fan of ULTIMA ONLINE than me. I've made friends there. The fact that I use the word "there" in reference to a computer game should tell you something about my personal opinion. The problem in writing a review of a game you've enjoyed for years is that you have to be able to set aside fanaticism and say publicly, "This is not good."

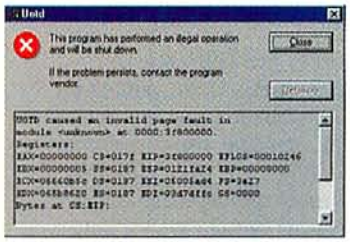
Ladies and gentlemen (deep breath), this is not good.



OOOH! AAAH! That's the old UO on the left. Forty dollars later, you get the negligible graphical update of the screenshot on the right.

ULTIMA ONLINE: THIRD DAWN

reviewed by Arcadian Del Sol



GET USED TO IT A familiar sight in the 3D world of Sosaria.

THIRD DAWN crashes frequently. In a game in which death means the loss of hours worth of materials and equipment, every little advantage becomes important. Needless to say, an unstable client comes down squarely on the side of disadvantage.

Visually, the spell effects are impressive, but beyond that, the new art is not good. Specifically, the players look emaciated and move like cartoons. Heads are too big on necks that are too long, and while you get a nice collection of animated gestures to toy with, the one gesture you'd really love to give the folks who released this product early is sadly not included. I would personally pay for a copy of *Gray's Anatomy* and have it shipped to Origin Systems if I thought it might make a difference.

In the tradition of ULTIMA ONLINE expansions, THIRD DAWN includes a new landmass to explore. It is by far the most interesting landscape to date. Not an inch is wasted in Ilshenar, and it stands as the only saving grace for this expansion. The drawback is that you can access this new land only if you use the new, unstable THIRD DAWN client. I asked 50 current players what they thought about this expansion and only one of them said he planned to use it; he added that his usage would be restricted to "occasional trips to Ilshenar." All said they were not impressed with THIRD DAWN, citing similar complaints about stability and the quality of the artwork. Perhaps sensing this, Origin is already hedging its bets by including a full version of the original client with every copy.

My advice? If you are already a player and fan of ULTIMA ONLINE, then this new client deserves a look. But don't pay full price—wait for the discount bin. If you are not already an ULTIMA ONLINE player, this latest rendition will not impress you, unless you are impressed by poor programming, horrible artwork, and paying $40 to be a beta tester. CGW

CGW RATED

PROS

Huge new landmass to explore.

CONS

Yet another beta released as product, with buggy code and horrible artwork.

End of an Era

"Then, [Mondain] did release his minions upon the land and crush the people beneath his evil will. And thus the First Era of the Dark Ages came upon the Lands of Britannia..."

This is how it all started back in 1980. Twenty-one years, three trilogies, and a successful online game later, the final Age of Darkness has fallen. On March 21, Electronic Arts laid off the ULTIMA WORLDS ONLINE: ORIGIN development team and cancelled the project in order to "increase focus on ULTIMA ONLINE." Origin Systems will continue to exist on paper, serving as little more than a janitor for ULTIMA ONLINE.

What began with two brothers and an idea eventually grew to become one of the longest running and most popular series of computer games ever written. Origin's ULTIMA and WING COMMANDER series were seminal events in gaming history, both becoming so popular that they inspired the sort of fandom attributed exclusively to Trekkies.

One of the more organized groups, the ULTIMA Dragons, continues to accept new members to gather and share fond memories and experiences from the land of Sosaria. To them and to many others—like, say, me—these games are something they can share with their children, and in that regard, perhaps the land of Sosaria will endure, and the journeys of the Avatar of Britannia will be learned by a whole new generation of computer gamers.

True to its motto, Origin Systems created worlds, but much more than that, it created dreams. Sadly, those dreams are over.

Requirements: Pentium-II 266, 64MB RAM, 715MB hard drive space. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium-II 350, 128MB RAM, 750MB hard drive space, 16MB 3D card. **3D Support:** Direct3D (Voodoo2 cards not supported). **Multiplayer:** Massively multiplayer online subscription-based service.

Publisher: Electronic Arts • Developer: Origin Systems • $40 • www.uo.com • ESRB Rating: Teen; blood, gore, and violence.

Flaws and all, OUT OF THE PARK BASEBALL 3 is the best text-based baseball sim on the market

Take Me Out to the Ball Game

OUT OF THE PARK BASEBALL 3

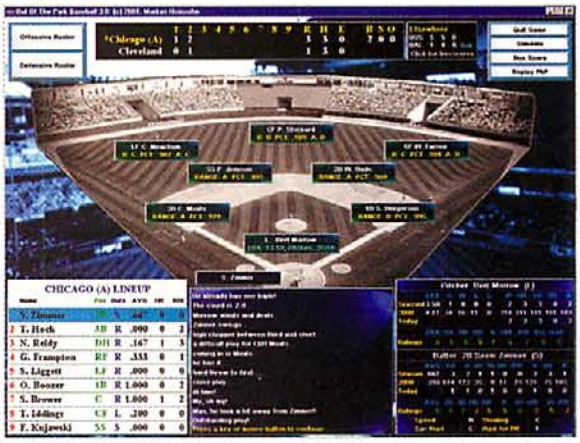
reviewed by Jeff Lackey

What could be more American than baseball, hot dogs, and apple pie? Why is it that the best simulation of our national pastime comes from the land of knockwurst and apple strudel? Markus Heinsohn, a German programmer and designer, has a deep affection for baseball that shows in every little detail of OUT OF THE PARK BASEBALL 3 (OOTP 3). Previous incarnations of the game have also glimmered with the minutiae that attracts baseball fanatics, but design flaws and the awkwardness of the interface resulted in only the hardest of the hardcore wanting to assimilate it. The good news is that while the game still exhibits some problems that prevent it from attaining the elite status of the very top sports management games (such as CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2000/2001), OOTP 3 is a baseball fanatic's dream.

OOTP 3 is a text-based simulation; you are the general manager of a professional baseball team. If you're looking for EA Sports–style eye and ear candy, you're playing the wrong game. Games play out on a top-down baseball stadium graphic, with a lineup box, a detailed pitcher/batter stats box, fielder text boxes, a scoreboard showing updated scores of games being played around the league, and a superb play-by-play description. If you've never played a good text sports sim, you'll be surprised by how well the play-by-play and stats draw you in.

Where OOTP 3 shines is in the options. You can enter a career league and create a dynasty, or you can replay a season from the past: Will the 1927 Yankees be as legendary under your helm as they were in real life? When you select a time frame, the game adjusts gameplay and management tendencies to match that era; thus the "dead-ball" era feels and plays very differently than today's slugfests.

You can choose to play each game or let the computer simulate as many as you like, perhaps only jumping in during crucial series or playoffs. All of the real-life management decisions are yours: trades, free agency, pitching rotations, injuries, when to promote minor leaguers, and more. Baseball fanatics tend to be statistics fanatics, and in this OOTP 3 shines, presenting every statistic you could possibly think of for every player, including "soft" data, such as desire to play for a winner and loyalty. OOTP 3 also includes a full range of coaches and scouts with their own sets of skills.



HERE'S THE PITCH While there are no cute animated players, the text play-by-play is very effective at pulling you into the game.

There are problems that keep OOTP 3 from hitting for the cycle. The interface is still is far from elegant, requiring numerous mouse clicks where a forward arrow/back arrow design would be much more effective. The minor league management and stats overview is clunky at best. The AI makes some occasionally odd management moves, the most serious being the AI general managers' tendency to run their teams into bankruptcy at an alarming rate (there is a financial model, but it is highly undeveloped at this point).

In a lesser game, these issues could be game killers. But for the true baseball fan, OOTP 3 does what it does so well that the flaws are tolerable. This is easily the best baseball simulation on the market today. CGW

CGW RATED



PROS

Superb career play and realistic historical season replays; statistics out the wazoo.

CONS

An occasionally awkward interface; weak financial model; AI can create some odd lineups.

Have It Your Way

OUT OF THE PARK 3 has developed a large fan base and a number of these fans have created utilities and add-ons that greatly enhance the game. Your one-stop-shopping sites for these enhancements are www.sportplanet.com/sbb/ootp-world/ and www.sportplanet.com/sbb/. Licensing costs prevent OOTP 3 from including official MLB player names and logos. Not to fear: These sites let you download a selection of roster sets and official logos. One of the best downloads is Frohmike's Stadium set, which replaces the small, generic stadium that OOTP 3 displays during the games with beautiful full-screen renditions of every park in the league.

Requirements: Windows 95/98/2000 (will not work with NT), 486 processor, 16MB RAM, 1MB SVGA graphics card (1024x800 resolution required), 80MB hard drive space. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium processor. **3D Support:** Direct 3D **Multiplayer:** Online leagues via Commissioner (no head-to-head multiplayer).

Publisher: Out of the Park Developments • Developer: Out of the Park Developments • $29.95 (can only be purchased online at www.sportplanet.com/ootp3/) • www.sportplanet.com/ootp3/ • ESRB Rating: Everyone

WATERLOO: NAPOLEON'S LAST BATTLE



WATERLOO is a laudable effort to package Napoleonic warfare in real time using the engine from SID MEIER'S GETTYSBURG. The shift to the Napoleonic era meant a host of changes, but ironically it's the underlying limitations of that three-year-old engine that sabotage this ambitious project.

BreakAway Games made a number of adjustments to incorporate the different facets of Napoleonic warfare. The various unit formations are a key part of gameplay, as is the increased importance of cavalry. The units have unique and colorful uniforms reminiscent of tabletop miniatures. Unfortunately, blocky graphics make the units and terrain sometimes look homogenous.

With all the changes to the game system, WATERLOO is a much more complex game to manage than GETTYSBURG was. Very often, it's up to you to make adjustments to your formations, because the AI rarely does it for you. In the smaller scenarios, that's not a problem. Deciding when to form square or at what moment to launch a cavalry countercharge against a squadron of spent enemy dragoons is part of the game. At this level, WATERLOO is an excellent adaptation of the original game system to a new historical period, and retains all the excitement of the original while adding depth to the decision making.

The larger scenarios, however, start to break down. A complete simulation of the actual Waterloo battle staggers under the weight of too many units and too many decisions and no way to properly manage them. You can pursue a successful strategy on one of the flanks only to find that your center has collapsed. This means you'll spend far more time with the game paused, scanning and updating unit orders, than you will in the real-time mode, which destroys the pace. And the featureless terrain means you'll quickly become disoriented and lose track of your position. Frankly, it's not much fun.

★★☆☆☆

The game system just isn't built to handle battles as big as the one that ended the Napoleonic Wars. Since it's this very scope that makes wargames compelling, WATERLOO misses the mark. *—Bruce Geryk*

Genre: Wargame • **Publisher:** Strategy First • **Developer:** BreakAway Games • $50 • www.strategyfirst.com • **ESRB Rating:** Teen; animated violence.

OUTLIVE

Genre: Strategy • **Publisher:** Take 2 Interactive • **Developer:** Continuum Entertainment • $50 • www.continuum.com.br/htms/main.htm • **ESRB Rating:** Teen; animated blood and violence.

The real challenge in discussing OUTLIVE is not mentioning STARCRAFT. Oops, I've already failed. Depending on how charitable you are, OUTLIVE is either an homage or a blatant rip-off. Its maps, artwork, and interface are nearly identical to STARCRAFT's, and the graphics engine and basic gameplay are derivative.

★★★½☆

Nonetheless, OUTLIVE is a pleasant surprise. In ways, it's better than STARCRAFT. It incorporates helpful features like convenient unit AI scripting, automated spell-casting abilities, and espionage tricks. And a unit maintenance cost means you can't just build up a massive army without reaching a point of diminishing returns. That and the layout of the research tree encourage you to pick a few units and rely on their special powers to trump your opponent. These powers throw a lot of twists into the gameplay. This isn't just a rushing game in which you lasso 20 units and throw them at the other guy's base. It's a game of tactics, with effective AI and an interface that lets you take advantage of all the detail without getting bogged down.

OUTLIVE is a potential sleeper that shouldn't be disregarded just because it's derivative. Its Brazilian developers are obviously well versed in what it takes to make a damn fine real-time strategy game. And that's just what they've done. *—Tom Chick*

MAJESTY: THE NORTHERN EXPANSION

It's the most frantic, hands-off game you'll ever play—and with this new add-on pack, MAJESTY: THE FANTASY KINGDOM SIM just got a whole lot more frantic. THE NORTHERN EXPANSION is certain to challenge even the most diehard MAJESTY fans, with Advanced scenarios that play more like the Expert missions from the original game, and Master class maps that are just downright mean.

★★★★☆

There's more of an emphasis on endurance and survival in the expansion's dozen missions, chiefly due to new scripting that sends wave after wave of monsters at you. You can destroy a number of monster generators only to have even more goblin encampments suddenly spring up across the map. Or your tidy little kingdom can be ravaged by a random earthquake. The near-constant challenges keep most end games from devolving to lackluster mopping-up affairs—especially considering the very challenging unit limitations and victory conditions of most missions.

New buildings provide some nifty strategic options (the Sorceror's Abode lets you buy and cast some very useful spells, while the Hall of Champions lets you put a bounty on any single monster type's head for a time). The game could still benefit from a larger, encompassing story and some players might gripe at not being able to use the new buildings in the original game (even though they'd screw up game balance), but for MAJESTY fans, this expansion is pretty much a must-have. *—Robert Coffey*



Genre: Strategy • **Publisher:** Infogrames • **Developer:** Cyberlore • $25 • www.cyberlore.com • **ESRB Rating:** Everyone; animated violence.

TRAFFIC GIANT



"What is so exciting about simulating public transport in cities? Many people asked us this question. During the development of this game, we often even asked ourselves this question." —*Preface to the TRAFFIC GIANT manual*

When even the creators of a game can't justify its existence, you know there are problems. Despite this fundamental drawback, JoWood's TRAFFIC GIANT was apparently and mysteriously a huge hit in Europe, prompting its belated and probably hopeless launch stateside.

TRAFFIC GIANT is a simulation/strategy game in the SIMCITY mold, with a god's-eye view of a bustling metropolis filled with tiny citizens trundling back and forth from home to work to little European "entertainment complexes." Unlike in SIMCITY, however, you have no ability to construct new buildings or roads. Instead, you're restricted to building and managing a network of buses, trams, and trains.

★★½☆☆

While the idea of constructing a superefficient network of buses may appeal to our tea-sipping, tram-riding overseas brethren, it's pretty alien to the average North American gamer, who is probably more interested in simulating a giant gas-guzzling hot rod with hood-mounted cannons. The basic goal of TRAFFIC GIANT is to eliminate private transportation. What red-blooded American can get behind a game that wants to get rid of cars?

To be fair, it's competently executed, with appealing graphics and sound effects (assuming you like buses). You can choose from an "endless" mode in which you compete against rival computer-controlled transit companies, or a host of goal-oriented scenarios, in which you attempt to meet some specific requirement (income, traffic reduction, public image) within a set period of time.

Unfortunately, there is no tutorial and the interface is far from intuitive, lacking such basic and familiar aids as mouse-over tips and help screens. The manual, as you might expect, provides plenty of hilarious Teutonic mistranslations, but little in the way of useful instruction, leaving the would-be transit official to flounder for some time, throwing up inaccessible tram stops and bus lines to abandoned construction sites.

The big problem is that the game doesn't get any more exciting once you master the interface. Rather than enjoying the godlike power over your subjects that titles like SIMCITY grant you, TRAFFIC GIANT makes you feel like a thankless civil servant, toiling over a tangle of convoluted bus routes and dwindling budgets. There may be some educational value here, but really, how many people want to pay to experience simulated bureaucracy?

—*Jason Kapalka*

Genre: Strategy • **Publisher:** JoWood • **Developer:** JoWood • $30 • www.trafficgiant.com • **ESRB Rating:** Everyone

SIERRA SPORTS' GAME ROOM

With far greater emphasis on quantity than on quality, SIERRA SPORTS' GAME ROOM is the Las Vegas buffet of computer gaming. Though its menu overflows with digital replications of barroom pastimes we've all come to know and love—air hockey, shuffleboard, pool, darts, pinball, and table tennis—few warrant more than an exploratory nibble.

★★☆☆☆

Shuffleboard is typical. It's equipped with three varieties of table, oodles of user preferences, and a crude yet satisfactory appearance, but sports a frightfully inefficient mouse-controlled shot-making process. As a result, long shots go short, short shots go long, fouls are commonplace, and final scores are far more dependent on good luck than skill.

Table tennis is a bit better, allowing players to direct the ball with force or precision and engage in furious rallies that evoke glorious memories of home video gaming's earliest title, PONG. Darts is nothing short of a complete waste of time, while air hockey's decent physics model can be a kick when you're not inadvertently knocking the puck into your own goal.

Both the pinball and pool modules are substantially abridged adaptations of stand-alone Sierra products. GAME ROOM's version of pool offers acceptable ball action and three varieties of gameplay, yet suffers from ridiculously inconvenient viewing and cue positioning. Pinball features just a single table, though it's a good one.



One of GAME ROOM's few true novelties is its roster of computer opponents, among them an abhorrent pseudo-intellectual Valley Girl, a dog that alternately growls and rolls over, and a strange dude who looks like he'll go postal if you sink that next shot.

Overall, GAME ROOM's simplistic formula is best suited to workplace coffee breaks or school lunch hours. Serious players are advised to look elsewhere. —*Gord Goble*

Genre: Sports • **Publisher:** Sierra Sports • **Developer:** Perpetual Motion Enterprises • $25 • www.sierrasports.com • **ESRB Rating:** Everyone

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Photography by Michael Stassus



GET YOUR GEFORCE 3 HERE

We take three GeForce3 cards and beat the living hell out of 'em

The first generation of nVidia GeForce3 graphics cards has finally arrived, and so far they're living up to the hype. Hailed by many as the most exciting technological breakthrough in years, they've turned in the highest benchmark scores we've seen yet—while supporting a host of amazing new graphics features (see "Terms of Endearment"). Games that take full advantage of the GeForce3's immense processing power can finally rival animated cut-scenes and movies.

Those games aren't here yet, though. Developers are busily incorporating the new features into their next games (and in some cases—GIANTS, for example—retrofitting them to existing games), but we're not expecting the first major wave of GeForce3-quality games until this fall.

So, while everyone welcomes the chip's full-scene antialiasing (FSAA) capabilities, vertex and pixel shaders, and newfangled Light Speed Memory Architecture, the big question facing gamers is: Is a GeForce3 card really worth the $500 or so you'll have to shell out for it if there aren't many games available that can take advantage of the new technology?

To Buy or Not to Buy

We tested the first GeForce3 cards we could get: Hercules' 3D Prophet III, Elsa's Gladiac 920, and VisionTek's GeForce3. As you might expect, they have more common than disparate features. All three boast 64MB of DDR SDRAM and have multiple outputs, including standard VGA and TV-out connections. Two factors figured prominently in our analysis: technological advancement and cost. Sure, all of these cards are fast and they all benchmarked well. But will the benchmarks translate to a better gaming experience while playing games that are currently available?

We tested these three cards, along with a GeForce2 Ultra card, on the 1.33GHz Athlon machine from Falcon Northwest that we reviewed last month, and the benchmark results were interesting. The Hercules, Elsa, and VisionTek cards earned 3D WinMark 2000 scores of 182, 194, and

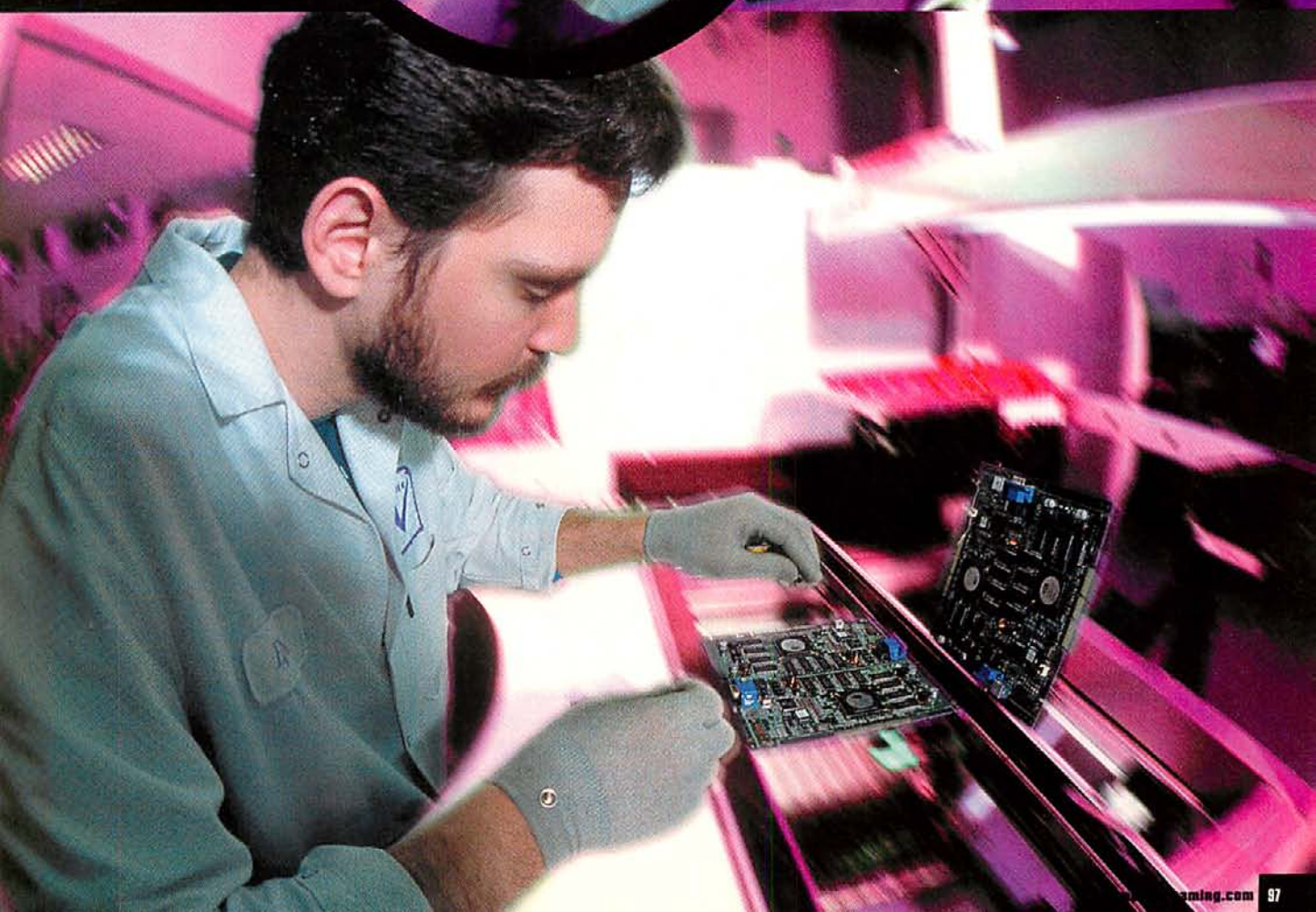
199 respectively, while the GeForce2 Ultra scored 151. However, our own 3D GameGauge 2.5 revealed the GeForce3's Achilles' heel. When playing older games—like QUAKE III: ARENA and UNREAL TOURNAMENT in 16-bit mode, the GeForce3 is a bit faster than the GeForce2 Ultra. But it sure as hell isn't $500 faster. Turn on all of a game's effects, such as tri-linear filtering, FSAA, and 32-bit color, and the GeForce3 starts to kick a little ass. But again, does it kick $500 worth of ass?

To Wait or Not to Wait

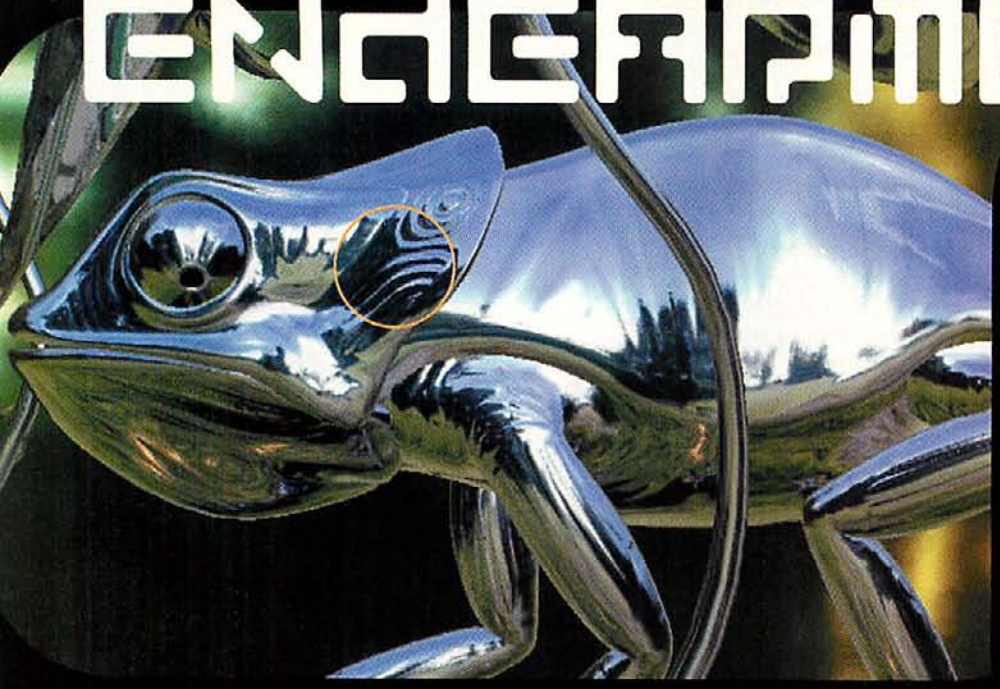
All of these cards are good, and the GeForce3-optimized version of GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO that ships with the Elsa card is sweet. Based on our initial impression, we were compelled to give all three GeForce3 cards Editors' Choice ratings. The thing is, if you buy one right now, chances are the games you're playing won't take full advantage of what the card has to offer.

The bottom line is: If you have anything less than a GeForce2 Ultra you'll see a marked improvement in the games you're currently playing as well as in future titles that are sure to take advantage of nVidia's technological advances. If, however, you're currently running a GeForce2 Ultra, you might want to wait a while before dropping those C notes.

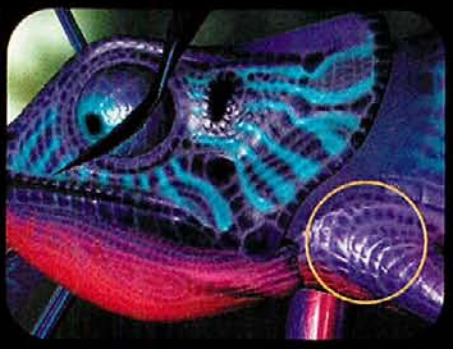


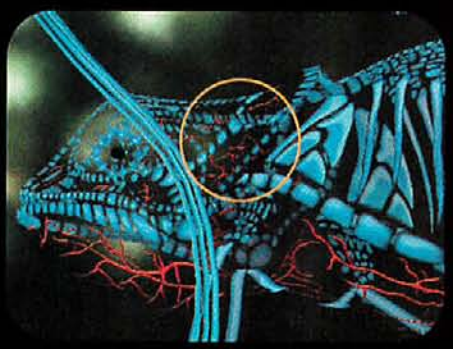


TEMPS OF ENDEARMENT



nVidia's chameleon demo shows off a plethora of the features that nVidia's GeForce3 boasts. In the image above, the chameleon takes on a metallic look thanks to the GeForce3's reflective bump mapping capability. In the image in the lower left, bump mapping gives the chameleon's skin texture as well as reflecting light off of its surface. Using pixel shaders along with an alpha channel, the chamelon takes on the look of a living skeleton.





Programmability: The nfiniteFX Engine

Until now, game developers were limited to a fixed set of effects. The nfiniteFX engine should give them the freedom to create a mind-boggling array of special effects.

Vertex Shaders

3D games are composed of triangles, and every triangle is composed of three vertices. (A vertex is the corner of a triangle where two edges meet.) Vertex Shaders give developers greater control over how those vertices look. They breathe life and personality into environments and characters, allowing fog that dips into a valley and curls over a hill, or true-to-life facial animation such as dimples or wrinkles that appear when a character smiles.

Pixel Shaders

Pixel shaders let developers add lighting effects to individual pixels, thereby giving surfaces like wood and leather a more realistic appearance. Pixel shaders are also used to create blemishes and facial hair.

Lightspeed Memory Architecture

Many people wonder how the GeForce3 can deliver greater performance than the GeForce2 Ultra when the two have the same amount of memory (64MB). nVidia's Lightspeed Memory Architecture is the answer. Designed to overcome the "memory bandwidth problem" that has plagued previous GPUs, this technology aims to avoid overloading the AGP bus with too much graphical data.

Full Scene Antialiasing (FSAA)

Antialiasing is the smoothing out of a rendered scene's jagged edges. The GeForce3 uses Quincunx antialiasing, a new antialiasing algorithm. Using Quincunx AA the GeForce3 can run FSAA at higher resolutions and faster frame rates than previous GPUs could.

JOHN CARMACK ON THE GEFORCE 3



Calling the GeForce3 "the most exciting thing in years that we've had to work with," id Software's John Carmack announced at the Macworld Expo in Tokyo that DOOM III will take full advantage of the new chip's capabilities. "We can bring cinematic drama to a lot of things in the game now. We can do these extremely moody and intense and scary things," said Carmack.

In a subsequent interview with CGW, Carmack added, "There are a few important features still coming up, but the biggest thing for us right now will be the drastically better performance we will be getting with the new engine on NV20 hardware. Once I have hardware in hand, I will be able to exploit the new vertex and pixel shader functionality to get higher quality bump-mapped specularity and faster dynamic recalculation of diffuse bump maps.

"The truly exciting thing is coming up in a year or two, only a few more steps from where we are now. Graphics hardware will be flexible enough to synthesize any operation we need. It will no longer be a case of the 'features' of one card over another, only the relative efficiency with which the cards can process them. That will be a wonderful time to be designing a graphics architecture."



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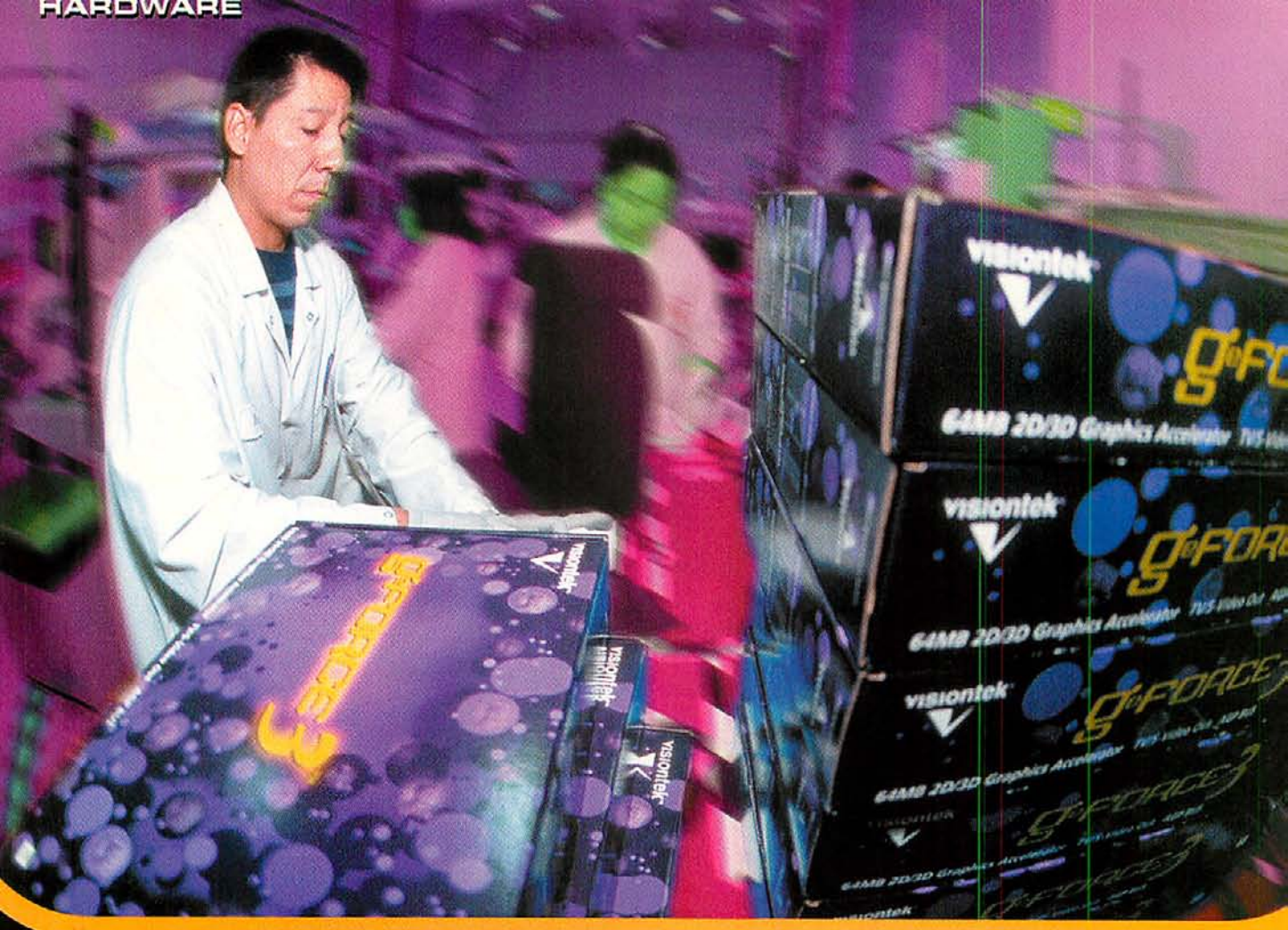
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THE NUMBERS GAME

We tested all four of these graphics cards on a Falcon Northwest 1.33GHz Athlon machine with 256MB RAM.

	Hercules 3D Prophet III	Elsa Gladiac 920	VisionTek GeForce3	GeForce2 Ultra
Star rating:	4 stars	4 stars	4.5 stars	N/A
3D GameGauge 2.5:	98.96	95.51	95.1	97.53
3D WinMark 2000:	182	194	199	151
Connectors:	DVI-output, NTCS and PAL TV-out	VGA and (optional) TV/S-Video out	VGA and TV/S-Video Out	N/A
Software Bundle:	No Software bundle	GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO (optimized for GeForce3)	No Software	N/A
Warranty:	3-year warranty	6-year warranty	3-year warranty	N/A
Price:	$550	$550	$480	N/A
Notes:	The best 3D GameGauge score of the bunch. Multiple outputs are good, but it lacks a compelling software bundle.	Solid benchmark scores and optional TV/S-Video out make this card a contender. Optimized version of GIANTS seals the deal.	This card is superfast. Add to that the relatively low price and we're sold.	N/A

TECH MEDICS

You've Got Questions, We've Got Answers

Where's My New Computer?

I am saving up for a new computer...but starting from scratch and not having a job is a problem. I am willing to spend up to $1,700 but less would be better. I have surfed and customized many brands and have narrowed it down to Dell, Alienware, Falcon Northwest, HP, and Hypersonic. What is your opinion on each of them? What should I put in the case? A Pentium or an Athlon? How many megahertz? RAM? What should I do?

All of the companies that you've mentioned are capable of building you a good machine. If you are more interested in getting the best bang for your buck, I would go with Dell. That being said, both Falcon and Alienware could easily put together sweet machines for you. The Alienware and Falcon machines will probably be more expensive than the Dell, though. Consider getting a 1.4GHz Pentium 4, 128MB RAM, the biggest hard drive you can afford, a 17-inch monitor, and—if you can swing it—a 32MB GeForce2 MX or 64MB GeForce2 Ultra graphics card.

Save That $300!

I'm considering purchasing a computer with a Dual 40MG ATA 100 hard drive system with a RAID IDE Controller card versus a single 60MG ATA100 hard drive. What are the advantages and disadvantages (besides the cost, which will be about 300 bucks extra) of the dual hard drive system?

I had to consult my mentor Dave Salvator for this one, and this is what he had to say: "Twin-spindles will yield more performance if running RAID 0, but you now have twice as many moving parts in your storage subsystem, and if one of the drives dies, you're hosed. Backing up is really important here, because with RAID 0 the data is striped over the two spindles and the setup looks like a single hard drive to the OS. Actually, when running RAID 0, you don't get more disk space because of the RAID 0 configuration, but you do get more performance, which for desktop boxes is kind of academic. Frankly, unless you're doing some heavy-duty audio/video editing/capturing/recording, get a single spindle and enjoy it, and put that $300 toward either a beefier 3D card, a higher-clocked CPU, or more system RAM."

>> Industry Bytes

Whither Micron PC

Micron PC, once the number three manufacturer of direct-sale PCs, recently announced that it's getting out of the PC business. Its parent company, Micron Electronics, is apparently selling its PC and memory (Crucial) divisions in order to merge with a Web-hosting company.

It's Not Easy to Launch a Console

Nintendo recently announced that the introduction of its latest console, the GameCube, has been delayed two months. According to a press release, gamers in Japan can expect to see the console this September, and gamers on this side of the Pacific should see it in time for Christmas.

Very Strange Bedfellows

According to various sources, Microsoft has announced that it will not support USB 2.0 in its yet-to-be-released Windows XP operating system. In a surprising move, the Redmond, Washington-based software behemoth announced that it will instead go with Apple Computer's IEEE 1394 (or FireWire) technology. When finished, USB 2.0 will boast throughput upwards of 480mbps, compared with USB 1.1's relatively scant throughput of 12mbps and FireWire's 400mbps.

R.I.P., DigiScents

Remember DigiScents? Probably not. The small startup was developing technology that would enable smell in everything from games to Web pages. The technology worked by installing a USB-based module to your computer that was loaded with a plethora of scents. When a game or Web page triggered a specific smell, the module would emit an

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review

The kid's got game: Wolop.com's 1.33GHz Athlon machine is quite the contender

Packing a Wolop!

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Sometimes we get our hands on a machine that is so fast that we're as skeptical as we are excited. That's the case with this 1.33GHz Athlon-based rig that we got from new-kid-on-the-block Wolop.com. Sporting a veritable laundry list of top-notch peripherals—256MB RAM, 40GB hard drive, Creative Labs SoundBlaster Live sound card, 64MB nVidia GeForce2 Ultra graphics card, Klipsch ProMedia 4.1 speakers, DVD-ROM drive, and TDK CD-RW—it's not difficult to understand why we were excited to get our hands on this baby.



★★★★½

We started benchmarking, tentatively. When Wolop sent us the test system, GeForce3-based video cards were difficult for many vendors to get their hands on. So the company sent us a machine with a 64MB GeForce2 Ultra. By the time you read this, however, GeForce3 systems will be available as well. Considering that, we decided to conduct two sets of tests: one with the GeForce2 Ultra card that came in the machine, and another with Elsa's GeForce3-based Gladiac 920.



With its default GeForce2 Ultra card, the system scored an impressive GameGauge 2.5 score of 94.27 and a likewise respectable 3D WinMark 2000 score of 122. In order to understand the significance of these numbers, compare them to the GameGauge 2.5 score of 98.96 and the 3D WinMark 2000 score of 182 that the Falcon Mach V (with a Hercules 3D Prophet III GeForce3 card) we tested last month received. In this configuration, the Wolop machine achieved a blinding QUAKE III ARENA framerate of 138.4fps in 16-bit mode. Hmmm. "This thing's pretty fast," we thought to ourselves. Then we put Elsa's GeForce3-based Gladiac 920 in the machine. Hold on!

With the GeForce3 card, the machine kicked serious ass, earning a GameGauge 2.5 score of 100.58 and a 3D WinMark 2000 score of 203! We even got a QUAKE III ARENA framerate of 144fps.

The Wolop system ships with everything you'd expect from a high-end gaming machine, and will have you gaming upgrade-free for a good amount of time. Action gamers will welcome the inclusion of a Boomslang Razer mouse, and everyone knows (or should know) about the amazing quality of the included Klipsch ProMedia 4.1 speakers.

As a newer build-to-order computer manufacturer, Wolop.com has taken some licks from other editorial sources. But if the stability, quality, and speed of the machine they sent us is any sign, they're learning from those blows as opposed to just getting more scars. We find no reason not to recommend this machine.

Coming in at under $2000—without a monitor—with a GeForce 2 Ultra (add a few hundred dollars more for a Hercules 3D Prophet III), this machine's pretty hard to beat.

>>> odor. In other words, a serious melee in QUAKE III ARENA would smell like gunpowder. Unfortunately, investors thought the idea simply smelled bad (bada bing) and pulled their funding.

Remember What We Said About Launching Consoles?

Indrema, the Linux-based console system, is no more. The open source set-top box that enabled video gaming, played DVD movies and MP3 audio, and surfed the Internet—all for under $300—was unable to find the funding needed to continue operations.

It seems investors are under the impression that with the PS2, Xbox, and Nintendo's GameCube on the way, we don't need another console.



The Miseducation of Wil O'Neal

Since I took over the helm of the *CGW* hardware section a few months ago, several things have become clear to me. Some readers love it when I talk about Xbox-related issues. Others hate it. Everyone is yearning for a more comprehensive Killer Rigs section. Building a system from scratch is harder than people think it is. And despite a graphics card market that has become simple to understand—what with the exit of former industry leader 3dfx—people still have no idea which 3D card to buy. Lastly, readers don't like it when I make fun of George W. Bush.

That said, the difficulty with learning is that once you learn something, it behooves you to do something with that knowledge. So here's how I intend to implement my newly acquired knowledge:

1 I will continue to talk about Xbox-related issues as I think they pertain to computer gaming on the PC.

2 Starting next month we're gonna bring back Killer Rigs in all its previous glory, which includes the Power Rig and the Lean Machine, as well as Killer Rigs in a Box. As for building systems from scratch: Don't buy motherboards from companies that 1) don't offer comprehensive technical support, or 2) provide manuals that are in a language other than one you know.

3 Basically there are two graphics chip manufacturers that you should care about: ATI and nVidia. If you're looking for a card in the $150 range, then consider a card with either an nVidia GeForce2MX or an ATI Radeon. If you're willing to spend more than that, just buy a GeForce3-based card.

4 Lastly, I'm a stark-raving-mad Democrat, and since this is my section, I'll continue to use it as my own bully pulpit from which to disrespect the president. CGW

Winner of Maximum PC's "Clash of the Gaming Titans"

"In terms of pure price-to-performance ratio, Falcon takes the cake."

"Because the Falcon won every benchmark, the scores of the other machines are represented as percentages of the Falcon's scores..."

"In this roundup, the best system is also the least expensive."

Maximum PC
May 2001

"The Falcon Northwest Mach V demonstrates the most consistently strong performance across all tests."

"the Mach V beat out the Alienware Aurora DDR system in all the 3D game tests by a steady 5 percent"

Gamespot Hardware, Clash of the Titans Faceoff
April 2001

"what you get uniquely from Falcon Northwest is their exquisite craftsmanship. Open the case, and it's so clean and neat you'd think it wasn't fully built yet."

"...it's wicked fast, built with loving care from quality components, intricately documented, and backed by fantastic support."

Computer Games Magazine
May 2001

FALCON NORTHWEST

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PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE — May 2001

COMPUTER GAMES STAMP OF APPROVAL — May 2001

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD EDITORS' CHOICE — June 2001

"all our hardware fantasies came true when Falcon Northwest brought in what could only be considered every gamer's dream system." "...we haven't been this excited in months!"

PC Gamer
May 2001

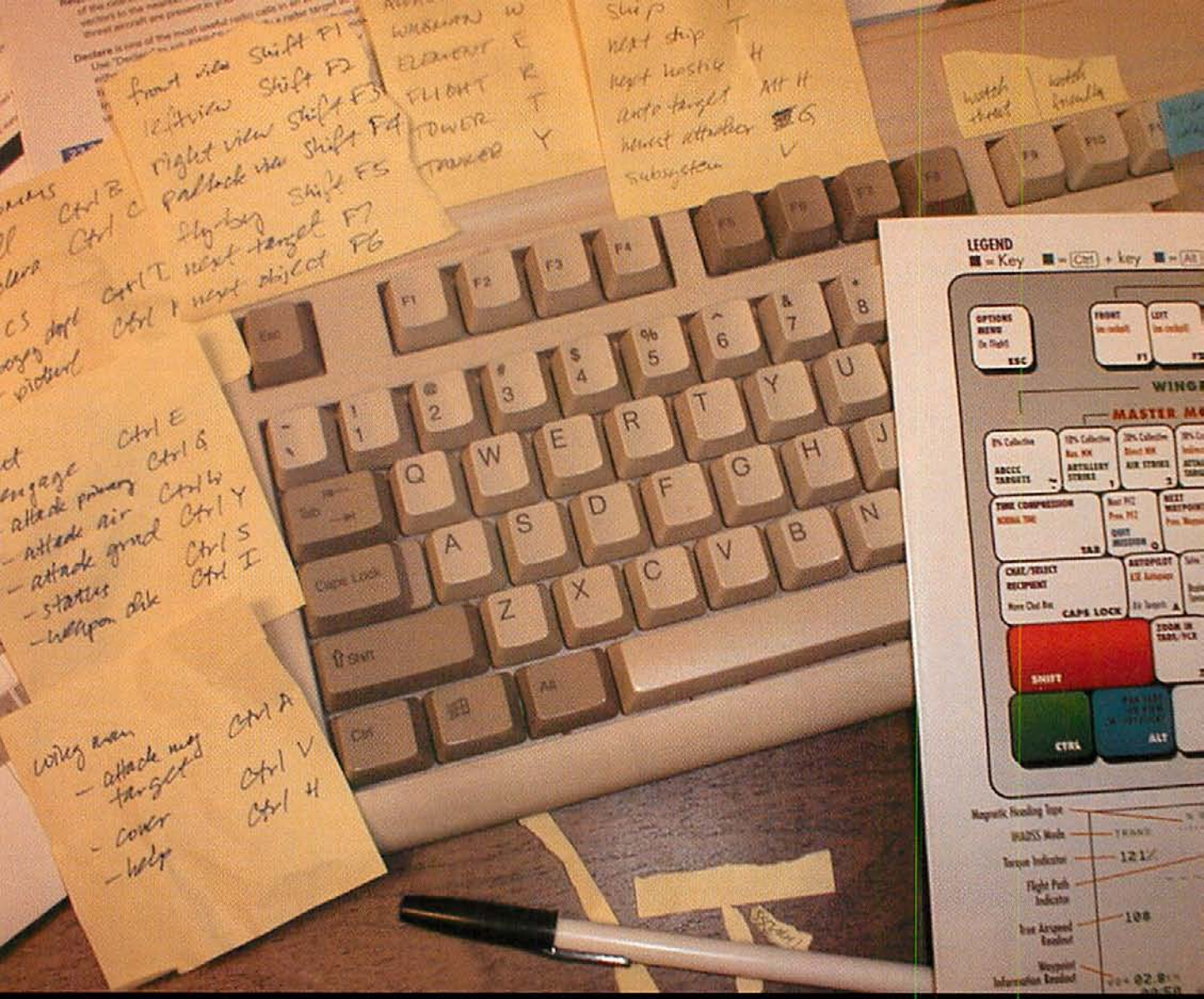
"It's hard not to recommend the Mach V. It's a super-fast machine and building it yourself would easily set you back another $1000!"

Computer Gaming World
June 2001



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16 PAGES OF TIPS, TRICKS, CHEATS, & STRATEGIES

GAMER'S EDGE

6 PAGES:
FALLOUT TACTICS

Bring glory and honor to the Brotherhood of Steel by dominating the enemy in the toughest missions



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Blazing through the quests of the first two lands



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Fallout
BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL

Bring glory and honor to the Brotherhood of Steel by dominating the enemy in the toughest missions

BY RAPHAEL LIBERATORE

Stand at ease soldiers, grab a nuka-cola, and pay attention to the Warning Orders I'm about to issue on three of the toughest missions your team will ever undertake: Rock Falls, St. Louis, and Kansas City. We're tackling the enemy in continuous-based mode, so if any of you pansies want out, now's the time to go.

Falling in Line: General Tactics

Sound tactics are the primary focus of FALLOUT TACTICS. How a player positions his squad before engaging in a firefight can easily make or break his success on the battlefield. The key is utilizing proven squad tactics in conjunction with a proper mix of weapons, skills, and sentry modes. Applying the right combinations at the right time will make a squad hard to beat. Make sure your squad is highly skilled at small guns for the early missions, a combination of light and heavy guns for middle missions, and heavy and energy weapons for later missions.

Everyone should have good Sneak skills, especially the snipers. It's always a good idea to have one highly skilled medic, who can double as the squad's driver (Pilot Skill) and scientist (Science Skill). Make sure your



12-GAUGE PEACEMAKERS The shotgun is a dangerous close-quarters weapon, especially since damage is sustained in an area of effect. Every squad should at least have one shotgunner. If you find the Pancor Jackhammer in mission 20, do not sell this gun, because it is extremely devastating at close range. The trick is finding enough shotgun shells to keep it happy.



medic can use small arms (such as shotguns) too, so that he's not a liability to the squad during heavy fighting.

Once your squad is inserted into the mission, use cover to your advantage by addressing soldiers' stance and position according to terrain. If they're in the middle of an open field, hit the dirt and make them less of a target. The crouched position offers the most benefit, so unless Line of Sight is hindered by objects, that's the ideal position to be in for the majority of the mission. Don't bunch soldiers together, especially during a firefight, or they'll end up shooting their own squad members in the back. Try flanking the enemy while positioning one to two snipers at a distance from the target for cover fire. Run only if you want to minimize damage and avoid the effects of grenades or rocket launchers. When possible, concentrate your entire squad on an individual enemy target, rather than risk spreading your attacks too thin. It's better to assault an enemy position en masse so that you can achieve a concentration of firepower. For the benefit of surprise, always keep your squad in sneak mode. ■■■

CHOW TIME! **The food in FALLOUT TACTICS can have healing properties, from one to eight hit points cured depending on the dish. Only the Pie Floater and Stinky Pie are harmful; avoid them at all costs.**

SPOILERS AHEAD... OK, YOU'VE BEEN WARNED

Rock Falls: Hostage Retrieval

OBJECTIVES: This mission focuses on the subtle nuances of squad tactics, so be prepared to utilize the entire squad for maximum firepower during firefights. Your primary objective is to destroy all four Raider leaders, and a good number of the 50 Raiders spread throughout the map. Your secondary objective is to uncover a mechanical device of "mysterious origin." You'll also want to free two characters that are being held captive eventually.

PREPARATION: It's time to visit the Recruits Master and add some Senior Initiates with high Lockpick, Sneak, and Science skills. Rage, Rebecca, and Ice are the best choices here. Upgrade your main character's armor to Metal Armor Mk II. Stock up on stimpacks, ammo, and miscellaneous medical supplies. If you have leftover Brotherhood scrip, upgrade squad members' armor as well.

MISSION: You start at the eastern edge of the map. Command recommends that your squad proceed south, then east in order to locate a gap in the Raiders' defensive compound. This is not your best move—the gap is heavily guarded and mined. Your best bet is to first hit the Raiders guarding the front gate. Sneak north, keeping close to the road. Eventually, your team will find ruins guarded by four Raiders. Using the Defensive Sentry mode, sneak your squad members into firing positions by the rocks on the left, by the partial wall in the center, and at the end of the fence to the right. When in position, attack. After the Raiders have been eliminated, loot them. Heading through the fuel dump can get tricky because there's plenty of open space for Raiders positioned on walls to fire into. Give the trench a wide berth (unless your Sneak skills are high), then move close to it and blast the Raiders taking cover there. Use cover wherever possible. Move the characters with the highest Sneak skills along the defensive wall toward the main gate, ready for action. Move the more heavily armed squad members near the wall and around the metal sculpture, then take out the Raider guards near the gate. While pulling equipment and weapons off dead Raiders, keep an eye out for patrols coming in from the south.

The next phase gets tricky because your squad must breach the gate and move inside the compound, where plenty of Raiders are milling around or patrolling. Arrange your squad members in a staggered line, with the snipers lying prone in the middle and the others flanking them with AK-47s, hunting rifles, and a shotgun. Enter the gate, crawling low and taking out all that oppose your team. The first building on the right houses a group of vicious Raiders led by Daisy. Sneak into the room, but stay spread out so you can avoid shooting one another in the back. Once the building is cleared, you'll find a prisoner named Nanuk and a few important items on a bookshelf. Make sure you grab the key. Next, position your sniper(s) to cover your team as it sneaks across the street to a building where the Raiders' second in command, Luke, resides. Before dispatching him, position your squad members so that they can take out any roving patrols moving about. Try to have them use walls and fences for cover. In one alley nearby, the Raiders will run up to the fence upon hearing gunfire, so make sure you have a couple of squad members with shotguns or AK-47s crouched and waiting for them to peer over the fence. Once the area surrounding Luke's building is cleared, move your squad near the door and outside windows. After everyone's in position, assault the building. Have one or two squad members pour cover fire through the windows using crouch-stand intervals. This will help them avoid the bulk of the direct hits while the others rush into the room, blazing away.

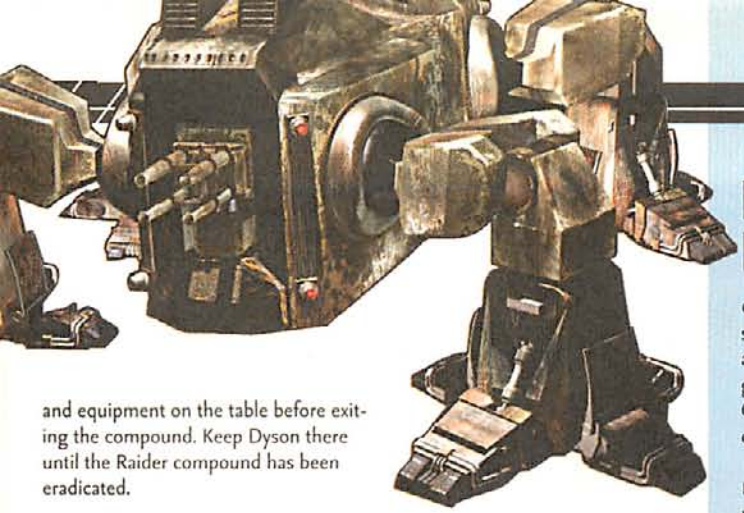
Next, move your team down the narrow alley, clearing buildings of Raiders, while making a beeline for the jail where Dyson, the Brotherhood scribe, is being held. Make sure one of your squad checks dead Raiders for equipment and the key needed to free Dyson from his cell. Use the window-door approach and dispatch the three jail guards. Then sneak one of your characters in with the key to open the door. Chatting with Dyson earns you the robot arm. Make sure you collect the weapons



SNIPER LOW-CRAWL OLYMPICS!

Every squad should contain at least one sniper character with high Perception and the following Perks: Sharpshooter, Better Criticals, More Criticals, Sniper, Light Step, Ghost, Death Sense, Bonus Rate of Fire, and Strong Back. Keep adding skill points to snipers' Small Weapons and Sneak skills. The best range weapons are the Sniper Rifle and the M-72 Gauss Rifle.

The M-16, M-14, M-1, and the hunting rifle also make decent sniper rifle backups. During the mission, you can take out the enemy from a distance by sneaking your sniper just in range of enemy positions. Make sure the sniper is prone and in Aggressive Sentry mode. Chances are, they'll be too far away to cause your sniper harm.



and equipment on the table before exiting the compound. Keep Dyson there until the Raider compound has been eradicated.

Next, sneak your best sniper toward the white door in the outer defensive wall and position the sniper as close to the wall as you can in an attempt to take out one of the guards on the wall. Once that is accomplished, regroup your party at the main street. This is a good time to heal and check weapon and ammo status. Once everything checks out, put everyone in Sneak and Crouch mode and head over to the house to the left of the entrance, then into the next compound, where Bo the Raider, third in command, and his cronies are waiting. Position most of your squad out of grenade range since Bo's loaded with them, but keep these squad members in good view of the door. Sneak everyone else to windows and other openings so you can whittle the enemy down with minimal casualties. After dispatching Bo and his men, move cautiously to the barn, where two startled Brahmin will rush into the open field, setting off mines that protect the area near the Raiders' headquarters. Try to take out the final guard on the wall, while cautiously moving across the field with your best perceptive soldier leading the way and looking for mines. Mines can be detonated with weapon fire or a high Traps skill.

Using Daisy's key on the locked switchbox opens the gate. Make sure your squad is positioned away from the gate as it swings inward. Sneak cautiously toward the two-story building. Move to the staircase on the side of the building. Avoid the front door, since it's difficult to pick. Assaulting the HQ from the top level going down is the surest route to success. Ascend the stairs and prepare to take out the Raider hiding behind the barrel at the top of the stairs. Then move to the rear of the building, but keep an eye out for more Raiders patrolling the wall near the second-story balcony, and inside the room on the second floor. Once all the nearby Raiders are terminated, check weapon ammo and heal injured characters before moving downstairs, where Jesse the Raider Leader is holding out. Sneak downstairs using your Defensive mode and position everyone by the back entrance to the room. You'll see Jesse and several dumb Raiders milling around. Open fire simultaneously by highlighting everyone and putting them in a crouched Aggressive mode. This should be a quick and dirty surprise attack, with minimal injuries. Gather weapons and equipment from the corpses and bookshelf. Don't forget to pick the lock on the safe to get what's inside.

Now it's time to reassemble your troops and mop up the rest of the Raiders before heading back to free Dyson. To the north is the Fuel Depot, where most of the Raiders can be picked off the wall using snipers. If you're lucky enough, you may be able to hit the fuel tanks and set off a very large explosion, killing the remaining Raiders in that vicinity. But watch out, because if you're too close to the explosion, you're liable to wind up killed along with the bad guys. Don't forget to collect the equipment in the tent at the back of the fuel compound.

Once the north is cleared, head over to the south, near the gap in the wall. Move cautiously, destroying mines in your path. You'll find an occasional patrol and lax guard along the way. Go back to the front gate and eliminate Raiders as they're milling about trying to figure out what happened to their mates. Do one more pass-through of the southern area outside the wall to see if you've missed any Raiders. Collect as many weapons and as much equipment as you can before heading back to Dyson and freeing him. Once that's done, head back to the exit grid on the eastern portion of the map. Double-check via your PipBoy if you're not sure exactly where the extraction point lies.

Kansas City: Remember the Alamo

OBJECTIVE: In this mission, there's a change of protocol, with your squad starting out as defenders rather than attackers. You'll have ghouls as allies, so don't be afraid to utilize them during mutant attacks. Your goal is to protect Bishop Defcon and his people, while defending Ghoul Cathedral from a horde of 60 heavily armored Super Mutants intent on capturing the Ghouls' holy relic: a nuclear warhead.

PREPARATION: Your squad should consist of at least three heavy gunners, two snipers, and a medic with high weapons skills. Arm the heavy gunners with SAWs and M60s, while arming the medic with an automatic shotgun. Arm the snipers with...sniper rifles. Make sure one of your squad members has a high Pilot skill. Equip the team with lots of ammo, stimpacks, Psychos, RadX, and RadAways. Make sure your squad has upgraded armor, preferably Metal Armor Mk II. Settle for Environmental Armor only if you lack an ample supply of RadX and RadAways. Not only does Environmental Armor offer less protection than Metal Armor, it drastically cuts into Sneak ability and Perception. Distribute at least 7 to 10 stimpacks and two Psychos to each soldier.

MISSION: Your squad begins the mission near the western gate of the highly fortified cathedral. Time is against you, so quickly activate your PipBoy's map and note the location of the gates. The mutants will hit all three gates simultaneously, but the heaviest attacks will come from the south and west. Before sending your squad members to their positions, have each soldier take a RadX and a Psycho. Set them to Aggressive mode and immediately dispatch two of your heavy gunners plus a sniper to the southern gate, while sending a heavy gunner and a weapons medic to the western gate. Place the gunners behind sandbag positions (which should already be manned by several poorly armed ghouls) and put the sniper on the rooftop near the southern entrance. Send your other sniper to the tower to the north.



The first mutant assault will come from the west. Stay behind the sandbags, and make sure you use stimpacks on your wounded soldiers as needed. Within a couple of rounds, the first wave of attacking mutants should be dead. The battle then shifts to the north, where the wall near the tower will offer an excellent field for killing mutants armed with pipes. Have your sniper focus on the mutant armed with the SAW. Don't be too worried about the northern battle. The combination of your well-placed sniper, ghouls, and a heavily mined area will eliminate the mutant threat rather quickly. The main battle lies back to the south. That's where the mutants assault the gate with everything they've got. The mutants' southern attacks are concentrated in two waves: a direct frontal assault and an assault from the flank. Take out their flank attack first, by unleashing your sniper from a distance, then moving your heavy gunners into position

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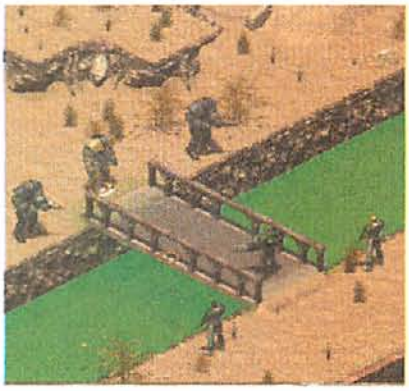


FIGURE 1

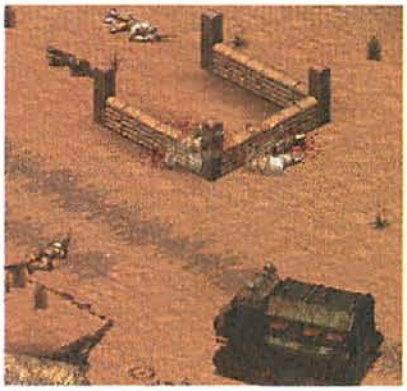


FIGURE 2



FIGURE 3

St. Louis: Reinforce and Rescue

OBJECTIVE: Hardcore combat makes St. Louis an exciting mission to play. Not only do you get to fight 40 Super Mutants (which, by the way, are armed to the teeth with M249SAWs, M60s, Browning .50 caliber machine guns, and rocket launchers), but you also get to drive around in a heavily armored APC. Your objective is to locate any remaining Brotherhood warriors and evacuate them to the extraction point, while protecting the APC. If the APC is destroyed, the mission is deemed a failure and you'll have to start over. Interestingly, you are supposed to rescue General Barnaky, but it's really a nonissue because he's already been escorted away from the scene. **SEE FIGURE 1**

PREPARATION: This mission requires some troop preparation before insertion. First off, you'll need a couple of soldiers high in Repair and Pilot skills to drive and repair the APC. In addition, you'll need members with high Sneak and Trap skills. It's also a good idea to take three soldiers with high Heavy Weapons skills in order to fire the machine guns you'll most certainly come across. Make sure you stock up your medic with RadX and extra stimpacks. Also grab some Psychos and Buffouts. If you haven't been grooming troops with these skills, it's high time you hit the Recruits Master for soldiers that have them. Trust me, you'll need these skills.

MISSION: Begin your mission in the southwest corner of an abandoned warehouse, where the APC and a table holding supplies reside. Grab the toolkits and supplies, then check out the map via the PipBoy. Note the two bridges to your immediate east. Before crossing the bridges, load the squad into the APC and drive north to a sandbag bunker in Aggressive mode. There three Super Mutants and a couple of patrols to the north reside. Take out the Super Mutants by cautiously moving to the bunker.

Once the Super Mutants have been eradicated from the area north of the abandoned warehouse, collect weapons, ammo, and equipment, and arm your heavy gunner specialists with SAWs. Repair the APC and heal troopers if necessary. **SEE FIGURE 2**

When the northern field leading up to the HQ bridge has been cleared of mutants, have your best soldiers with high Sneak and Trap skills move over to the far bridge to the east. Make sure they move around the three mutants at the southern bridge, heading to the bridge above it and moving across with care to avoid the traps. Head over to the abandoned bunker, where you'll find a trapped chest. Disarm it and grab the sniper rifle and ammo. Now move your troops southward to the mutants waiting at the southern bridge. They're partially hidden behind the sandbags. Give your trap specialist a Psycho and sneak him forward, while positioning your sniper at the flank of the mutants. Have the rest of your troops loaded into the APC and cross the bridge in Aggressive mode. Once in range, get close to the mutant armed with grenades, and open fire with your soldiers. Sneak your sniper expert on the hill behind the sandbag position in Defensive mode while loading the SAW gunners inside the APC. **SEE FIGURE 5**

Move the APC to the north and head east past the sniper and be on the lookout for the mutant with a rocker launcher. Have your sniper take him out as you edge your APC closer to him, but try to stay close to the boulders so his rockets hit them instead of the APC. Once the mutant is taken out, move your squad to the area littered with fallen Brotherhood warriors of Fang Squad. Collect loot, heal soldiers, and make repairs on the APC if needed. Cautiously move to the next bridge up north, which has two mutants guarding it, while another mutant (armed with a rocket launcher) lies hidden in the cliffs. Train your sniper on him while edging your APC forward with your squad members set to Aggressive mode. Take out the mutants at the bridge and on the other side, where two more are waiting. Beyond them, at the structure to the north, are two mutants armed with rocket launchers. Try to take them out without sustaining too much damage to the APC. Collect arms and equipment from dead mutants and regroup. **SEE FIGURE 3**

Next, move your APC and sniper, along with a trooper with high Traps skills, to the elaborate



FIGURE 5

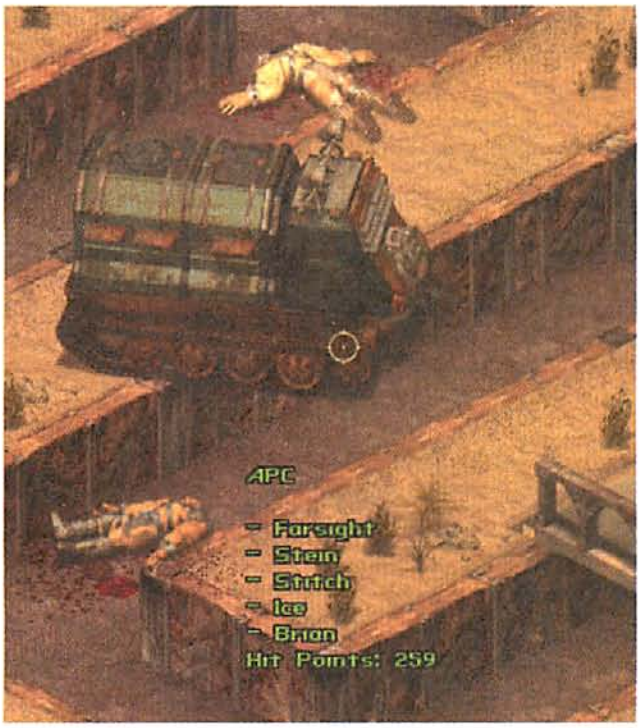


FIGURE 4

bunkers to the northwest. Keep the sniper on the flank of the vehicle while using your trap expert to clear away mines that would otherwise disable the APC. When you're close enough, load everyone into the APC, save the sniper, and make sure everyone's in Aggressive mode. Drive the APC as close to the trenches as possible and open fire on any mutant standing in your way. **SEE FIGURE 4**

The APC will take hits, but for the most part, it will be okay. Whatever you do, don't let the APC fall below 100 hit points of damage. Retreat and repair immediately if necessary. The APC should protect the squad while maneuvering in drive-by shooter fashion. Disembark from the APC and collect arms, ammo, and other equipment once the eastern trenches have been cleared. Now move your squad cautiously toward the western trenches.

Have your sneak expert quaff a RadX and move him toward the northern bridge, where you'll find a booby-trapped soldier named Brimstone in the trench by the bridge. He wants you to rescue him, but he's a goner. Retreat immediately from his explosion radius to avoid the trap. Return to the APC and move northeast, with your sniper leading the way in Defensive mode, sneaking into place as your APC moves into position.

Mutants are scattered around the area, so shoot the closest ones, then hide. Mutants will come pouring out of their positions and attempt to descend on the APC. Make sure your squad is set to Aggressive mode and open fire as patrols approach the APC's position. Collect weapons and equipment, repair the vehicle if necessary, then move your sniper northward toward the lone guardhouse in order to take out a mutant with a rocket launcher.

Once he's been taken out, drive the APC to the guardhouse. There's another mutant in a nearby trench; take him out in the APC. Head east and find Talon Squad. There you'll talk to a heavily wounded Paladin Solo, who's with his remaining men. Use your medic to heal them with stimpacks and bandages, then load them into the APC. Once loaded, Talon Squad members cannot extract from the vehicle. You now have the option to extract from the area and complete the mission, or finish off the rest of the Super Mutants in the HQ compound. Unless your team is healthy and supplied with plenty of stimpacks, Psychos, Mentats, and Buffouts, you are better off extracting your team from the area in order to complete the mission. CGW

KANSAS CITY: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 109

behind the wall as the mutants come pouring in to gain access to the cathedral. Next, concentrate on the mutants preparing for their frontal assault. Don't lose sight of the two mutants armed with Avenger Miniguns. Try to target them with your sniper specialist from the wall or rooftop. After the mutants take a few casualties, their frontal assault will fizzle, and they'll retreat. Make sure you send your three heavy gunners after the retreating mutants. Have your sniper pick them off as they flee,



but don't let the pursuers go too far. There are plenty of mutants hiding in alleys and buildings surrounding the area, so it's best to clean out the area with a full team. Regroup at the southern gate, healing up and collecting ammo and weapons from dead mutants and ghouls. If you're feeling brave, you can place your sniper along the southern wall, where he can spot one of the mutant leaders and his bodyguards in a tent, begging to get killed. Easy pickings.

Move your sniper and one heavy gunner to the western gate, where mutants are planning a counterstrike. Farther along the road leading into the western gate are two smaller watchtowers, where two mutants are armed with a dangerous .50 caliber machine gun and a rocket launcher. Sneak the sniper to a position where he can start picking them off. At the same time, flank your heavy machine gunners along the base of the tower and have one of them climb it and eliminate the mutants wielding the rocket launcher and M-2 (they should be almost dead if your sniper was on the job). Now it's time to sweep the western area clean of mutants. Watch out for mines. When all mutants are dead, it's time to heal and collect ammo and equipment. Next sweep north by flanking the western fields outside the cathedral walls and clearing out any mutants lingering outside the wall. Since they're only armed with pipes, it should be an easy operation.

Gather all your forces and head south to clear out the remaining mutants and their leaders, in house-clearing fashion. There are two ways this can be accomplished: by flanking the outside perimeter wall on the west, heading south and then east, or by taking a more direct route down the main road outside the southern gate and moving from house to house. I prefer the flanking maneuver. First, prepare your squad by healing injured members and finishing off your remaining Psychos. Keep your squad in Aggressive mode. Place one of your snipers near the sandbags at the southern gate. Double-check your PipBoy for the location of mutant leaders, and concentrate on taking out those areas first as you sweep south, then east. Clear rooms by positioning your squad members at multiple openings, doors, and windows for maximum firepower. Once a room is clear of mutants, you'll find an assortment of goodies. Make sure you collect arms, ammo, and equipment from bookshelves and chests, as well as dead mutants. Follow this procedure from building to building until all mutants are eliminated, then head on over to Bishop Defcon in the central part of the cathedral. Once you've chatted with him, the mission is complete and you can move to the extraction point listed in your PipBoy's map. Time to celebrate.

BLACK & WHITE

BLAZING THROUGH THE QUESTS OF THE FIRST TWO LANDS

It's not easy being a merciful/vengeful god. There's only so much compassion/ire you can give out to your loyal followers. As if progressing through the story weren't hard enough, there are also these little quests that mete out rewards both good and evil. Here are some additional tips on training your Creature, and straight-out solutions to the Silver Scrolls you'll find in Lands 1 and 2. I'll discuss the scrolls for later lands in the months to come.

THE CHARLES ATLAS WAY

Two things to remember when it comes to keeping your Creature fit: rocks and the Creature Pen. Your Creature's strength determines how much damage he inflicts in Creature Combat, so it's a good idea to keep it as high as you can (99 percent is optimal). The standard way to boost strength is to simply tell your Creature to pick up a rock, then have him jog around the land, rock in hand.

For your Creature to grow in size, he should spend most of his sleeping time in the Creature Pen. When you see your Creature yawn, quickly slap him to discourage him from to taking a nap on the floor. Instead, lead him back to the Creature Pen, and when he yawns, pet him so that he will want to sleep in the Creature Pen more often. Not only will he heal faster, but he will also grow at a faster rate while resting. It took only a few minutes of trained napping for my Creature to grow taller than the two pillars placed at the entrance of the Creature Pen.

The "cheapest" way of developing strength and size is to use the Enlarge Creature Miracle. Make your Creature supersize, then hand him a large rock that he wouldn't normally be able to lift.

When he resumes normal size, he will continue to carry the rock until you tell him to put it down. With rock still in hand, have him do as many laps around the land as you can; you might want to press Alt-2 to speed up time. After a few laps with a heavy rock, his strength should be significantly better. He will also be pretty tired, so you should tell him to sleep back in the Creature Pen.

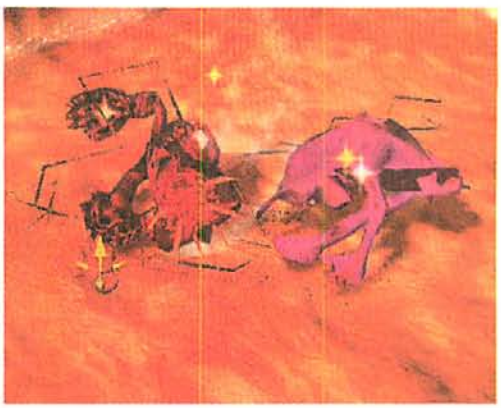
Your Creature can go from 0 to 99 percent strength in about 20 minutes with this method.



NOT-SO-GENTLE GIANT First, temporarily boost your Creature's size and strength, and get a really big rock...



...Then just keep him jogging laps around the land, with the big rock, until you have a lean, mean godly machine.



ROCKY BC With a buff Creature, you should be able to take out other, weaker Creatures with only a few hits.

BY THIERRY NGUYEN

LAND 1

STONE'S THROW

REWARD: Chest with Beach Ball
Just follow the tutorial instructions. If you have a leash attached to your Creature, you can use this opportunity to practice teaching your Creature how to throw. You also have the option of training your Creature train to throw rocks at the nearby house. Whether you take it or not, you'll get the same reward when you knock the stone off the pillar.

SAVING THE DROWNING

GOOD REWARD: Strength Miracle Dispenser
EVIL REWARD: Anger Miracle Dispenser
The reward depends on how you've trained your Creature to treat villagers. Just lead your Creature into the water and have him interact with each of the drowning villagers. If your Creature ends up throwing or eating everyone, then you'll get a miracle to perpetuate his anger. If he drops everyone off safely, you get a Miracle to keep him strong.

FINDING THE SHEEP

REWARD: A pile of food for the first five, and the Sheep Creature for all nine.
If you want to switch to the Sheep, then it's in your best interest to track them all down. Otherwise, you can just ignore this quest, or feed the sheep (and maybe their shepherd) to your Creature.

SHEEP LOCATIONS:

- Near the sculptor's house.
- Near the huge gate.
- Within a fenced enclosure with some pigs (near the house of the sister with the lost brother).
- On a mountaintop, close to the hermit.
- Lurking near the trees next to where you find the sick brother.
- Next to a singing stone by the sea.
- Near the pillar where you did the Stone Throwing challenge.
- Two are near each other in the ravine where you start the game.



SHEEP AND STONE ALIKE You'll find both a lost sheep and a singing stone in the forest near the sick/dying brother.

IMPRESSING THE HERMIT

GOOD REWARD: Water Miracle Dispenser
EVIL REWARD: One-Shot Water Miracle
This will be the "hardest" of the Silver Scroll quests, mostly because of the time investment. Try to see the hermit as early as possible (ideally, when you first get your Creature), so that you won't need to spend as much time developing your Creature. Refer to the beginning for tips on how to train and bulk up your Creature. After a while, check back with the hermit; he should be impressed. You might want to wait until after the Guide is gone, so that your Creature turns out to be the only Creature on the island. Or you could just kill the Guide.



FIT FOR A GOD-KING A careful regimen of rock lifting and Creature Pen sleeping yields results that should impress even the most jaded hermit.

SINGING STONES

REWARD: Food Miracle Dispenser
You'll need to not only find all the singing stones, but also put them in the correct order. Putting them in order isn't so tough, though—all you have to do is make sure they chime off in ascending order. Finding them all is the tricky part.

STONE LOCATIONS:

- Right near the circle of stones.
- Behind the village graveyard.
- In the hermit's quarry (where you found the third stone for the sculptor).
- Near the trees where you find the sheep and the sick brother.
- In the mountain backside, where a river ends near town.

LOVE IT OR LEASH IT

Proper leash management is key. Most of the time, you should have the Leash of Learning active. That way, whatever you're doing, your Creature will probably be watching—and learning as a result. Use the other two leashes for different effects on both friendly and neutral/enemy villages. Use the Leash of Compassion to have your Creature focus on impressing villages, and the Leash of Aggression for beating the village into submission. Also, rather than attach the leash to the Village Store, attach a Leash of Compassion to a specific desire flag; your Creature should then cast Miracles to fulfill the attached desire.



THE BURNING SPIRE SPEAKS Just attach a Leash of Aggression to an enemy Village Center, and let your Creature be.



WATER OF LIFE Use the Leash of Compassion to have your Creature help supply food and water to your towns.

THOSE ANNOYING BOATMEN

REWARD: Water Miracle Dispenser
These guys are extremely annoying, and a Water Miracle isn't exactly the greatest motivation for helping them out. Yet, they'll be back down the line, and as a result, they turn out to be useful even for evil gods. Just give them what they ask for (wood, grain, and either pigs or cows), and they'll be on their way.

PIED PIPER

GOOD REWARD: Heal Miracle Dispenser
EVIL REWARD: Lightning Miracle Dispenser
Again, this depends on how you've trained your Creature to treat humans. Wait for the Pied Piper to come strolling along (he's a unique-looking villager), and quickly attach your leash to him, letting your Creature grab him. Then eat or kill him, or release him near the doors in the mountainside to free the children.

GETTING PAST SLEG THE OGRE

REWARD: Beach Ball and Healing Miracle Dispenser
The easiest way to do this is to just drop a pile of food in front of Sleg, and wait for him to fall asleep. If you want to add some points to your evil meter, then have your Creature engage Sleg in combat. He shouldn't be too hard to beat—I've taken him out with Creatures at varying levels of power and ages.

COOKING THE MUSHROOM

NOTE: You'll get this quest only if you have a force-feedback mouse.
REWARD: Loving Creature Miracle Dispenser
Just look for the mushroom that gives you the most feedback. You might want to adjust your mouse settings for maximum feedback before embarking on this quest, as selecting the wrong mushroom results in an explosion.

A CRAPPY TIP

Your Creature's poo is honest-to-god useful. Drop some droppings onto some fields, and they'll fertilize your crops, making your farms more productive. Drop some other droppings into the Village Stores of enemy villages, and voilà, you've gone and made all the villagers sick. Whenever you get the message "Your Creature wants to poo," quickly use the leash to point it to wherever you want the droppings to go (such as a field), then follow up with a reassuring stroke for potty training.

LAND 2

STOPPING THE COW THIEVES

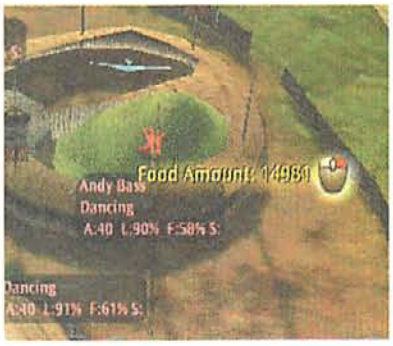
REWARD: Increased Power Lightning Miracle
You're going to have to apply force, whether you're good or evil. The reward is mostly a measure of how much force you apply. You can hit the thieves indirectly with a Fireball or Lightning Miracle and then heal them afterward. Or you can just outright kill all the kids, or maybe just kill the farmer himself—either way, you'll get a more powerful Lightning Miracle out of it.

FALSE IDOLATRY

REWARD: Increased Fireball Miracle
The key word here is "burn." A Fireball won't last long enough to burn the idol, so you'll need to do something to fan the flames, so to speak. Toss a bunch of trees around the idol, and then throw in the Fireball. The flaming trees should heat up the idol sufficiently, and voilà, no more violating the Second Commandment.

CURING THE PLAGUE

REWARD: Lightning Miracle
First off, grab all the green and spoiled food from the Village Store, and chuck it somewhere. Once you've gotten the food out of the Village Store you can start casting Heal on all the sick villagers. The Lightning Miracle is a useful one, so it's worth it for the evil god to be good in this quest. Also, you can dump the food into the Village Stores of other villages. Think of it as a form of divine chemical warfare.



TURNS MY STOMACH Don't just dump that spoiled food into the ocean; mess up some enemy towns with it.



STONEHENGE Depending on your second song, you can either redecorate the island or raise the dead.

SINGING STONES, PART II

GOOD REWARD: Falling snow all over Land 2

EVIL REWARD: Area to Animate Corpses
Now you actually have to play tunes on these Singing Stones. There are three songs total, but you'll play only two at a time: one to "activate" the Stones, and the second to achieve a specific effect. Listen to your villagers, and you'll hear some of them whistling the tunes.

If you're too impatient to monitor the villagers, here's a quick-and-dirty guide:

The initial song is "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." Numbering the stones from left to right, it is played as follows: 1, 1, 8, 8, 9, 9, 8, 6, 6, 5, 5, 3, 3, 1. Good gods who want to add a bit of winter cheer can play "White Christmas" (2, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) to get some snowfall. If you're evil, and you want to have a bunch of walking skeletons and whatnot, play the "Funeral March" (2, 2, 2, 2, 5, 4, 4, 2, 2, 1, 2). The circle will stop reviving your corpses after a while, but you can just play the song again to re-energize it.

CIRCUS CIRCUS

REWARD: Flock Of Wolves Miracle Dispenser
Like these Circus fellows say, just give them some animals, and they'll start releasing some of the slaves. Try giving them two mountain lions (on a hillside near the circus), a wolf (near the village where this Scroll is triggered, by the water), and a couple of horses (grazing near the first neutral village you convert). For extra credit, you can check the islands and the mountains for some tigers and turtles.

SWIMMING CHILDREN

REWARD: Enlarge Creature Miracle Dispenser
This quest is identical to saving the drowning villagers back in Land 1. But even if you're evil, it's worth the time to rescue the children rather than eat them. With access to Enlarge Creature, you have the cheapest—and quickest—way of improving your Creature's strength.



TASTY CHILDREN Don't kill these kids, as you'll get Enlarge Creature for saving them, which leads to your having the buffest Creature around.

Europa Universalis

Making European unions the old fashioned way: with guns, emissaries, and merchants

by Tom Chick

The whole of EUROPA UNIVERSALIS is divided into three parts. It's not so much a single unified game as it is a nexus for three interwoven subsystems: warfare, diplomacy, and economics. Playing through the tutorial will give you a good overview of the game's mechanics, but the best next step is to approach each of these components one at a time.

WARFARE

This will be one of the most accessible parts of EUROPA UNIVERSALIS for strategy game veterans. Beware attrition, which is considerably worse during wintertime (indicated by the province turning white on the normal map mode). Don't underestimate the importance of leaders, who can skew the odds of a battle considerably—check those enemy armies for leaders by using the mouse to call up tool tips. Remember a couple of simple combined arms rules: in open provinces (colored beige), the player with more cavalry will enjoy a considerable advantage; sieges without artillery will take a long time.

To get a taste of warfare, play as Sweden in the Great Northern War scenario. You'll be dropped into the defensive role in a war just getting under way. Note the importance of Danish ships for blockading troop movements from Sweden to the Baltic provinces. Experiment at will, then turn the tables and try the scenario from the Russian side for a taste of the offensive role.



DIPLOMACY

Diplomacy in EUROPA UNIVERSALIS depends on what you're trying to accomplish. But to flex various diplomatic options, load up the Age of Enlightenment scenario and play as the silver-tongued Prussians. This small, fractured country doesn't have much leverage yet, so use your diplomats to hitch yourself to a powerful ally, based on which way the political winds are blowing. Wait for someone else to start a war and then ride in on your ally's coattails to grab a province or two.



ECONOMICS

To comprehend economics in EUROPA UNIVERSALIS, you first have to understand how provinces funnel ducats into nations' coffers. Try the Grand Campaign as Portugal for a taste of colonial expansion and development. As you explore, be on the lookout for valuable commodities. They won't bring in a lot of money immediately, but as you build up cities, the price of a commodity plays a major role in how much money you make from a province's production.



There are two numbers flanking the shield that shows your province's resource. The number on the left represents production and taxes. It's the money you get directly, and the amount is determined by the number of people living there (taxes) and the resource being produced (production). To increase this number in a province, take the following steps: 1) Boost your Infrastructure level. 2) Appoint officials. 3) Build Manufactories. These are all long-term activities that result in a strong economy further down the line. For the short term, make sure your Stability is maxed out and take out only as many ducats as you need to keep inflation down; adjust the To Treasury bar on your budget to as low a level as you can bear.



The number on the left of a province's resource shield is the trade income. You have to fight for this money, since it's diverted to a Center of Trade as displayed on the trade overlay. These Centers are built by the computer according to some inscrutable algorithm. If you happen to control the province where a Center is located, you earn tariff income, but you still have to fight for your trade like everyone else.

Trade takes almost as much hands-on attention as warfare. Your Merchants have to fight for a slice of the pie when they're sent to a Center of Trade. How well they fight is determined by a nation's trade level, so be sure to do a little scouting before you send your Merchant into a tangle of wily Genoans and Venetians. Instead of sending Merchants into a Center of Trade one at a time, consider sending them in clusters to simultaneously uproot another nation's Merchants and gain a toehold that'll be hard to loosen. The best way to try using trade to build your empire is as the Netherlands in the Age of Revolutions scenario, in which you can throw around the power of your numerous Dutch merchants. CGW





THE TRIBE SPEAKS OUT ON TRIBAL WARFARE

by Blake Hutchins and other members of the TRIBES 2 team

Since TRIBES 2 came out, thousands of players have been discovering the game's tactical wealth and depth. CGW was nice enough to ask us here at Dynamix about our favorite tactics, so without further ado, let's take a look:

Daryl "Snow Leopard" Nichols on sniping:

When sniping, carry a blaster. It works great for taking out enemy base equipment, since blaster shots ignore shields and have great range. One of my favorite tricks is to use my blaster to shoot an enemy's deployable inventory station, but stop just short of destroying it. Wait until the enemy shows up to rearm, and then pop the station. The resulting explosion frequently takes him out. If it doesn't, he'll still most often stand there in shock, and you can then finish him off with a disc.

Use bait to lure targets into your crosshairs. For

example, you disable an enemy turret with your blaster. *Somebody* will come to repair it. Ninety-nine percent of the time, he'll just stand there while he makes repairs. Bang—easy head shot.

During a Team Hunters game, watch the action from a distance. When an enemy gathers a large number of flags, pick him off. This creates a "yard sale" complete with waypoints, and gives your team a chance to grab a significant number of flags.

Brian "Twitch" Ramage on flag snatching:

On Quagmire, I like to get into a Juggernaut armor with an energy pack. The energy pack makes me nimble enough to get near the enemy base in a reasonable amount of time. Once I'm about 200 meters from the enemy flag, I take out any turrets using the missile launcher, and then request targeting help from my team to mortar the flag. If my team can't spot for me, I'll just lob mortars around the flag waypoint to clear out any deployable turrets. This tactic often stings defenders into hunting me down, thus leaving their flag wide open.

For a fast capture of an open-field flag with vehicles (Slapdash, Katabatic, Archipelago, Desiccator, Reversion), you can get a big boost in speed by getting in a Shrike or Wildcat and gunning it almost directly at the flag. When you're about 100 meters from the flag, jump from the vehicle. You'll be moving very fast, but if you've lined up right, you'll have to use only minimal jet energy to adjust your course onto the flag. Once you snag the flag, jet hard in an escape direction, preferably toward your own base. Using an energy pack, you'll outpace almost anyone pursuing. For an even faster capture, have a teammate wait for you at a designated waypoint with a Shrike or Wildcat ready to go.

Jesse "Dr. Awkward" Russell on single-player:

When crossing the force-field bridges in the final Training mission, go out in Assault armor, drop an inventory station on the shore, and use the missile launcher to take out the sensors and turrets. Then grab an energy pack, jet midway onto the bridge, and run the rest of the way in. On the Hard difficulty level, the bridge appears for only five seconds, so you have to take off before the bridge even shows up, timing it so that you land when it appears and get a good bounce to cover the remaining distance.

Jade "Frank Rizzo" Dhabolt on base seizure:

In maps with separate generator towers, hitch a ride to the enemy generator tower before any defenders set up there. Deploy a remote inventory station, and place turrets and sensors. Then take out their generators, and watch their base shields go down...and stay down.

Use the cloak pack/shocklance/ELF combo to keep the enemy base in disarray. Cloak to stay out of sight, shocklance the heavy defense, and use the ELF to disable turrets without any loud, attention-getting explosions. Defenders will spend a lot of effort hunting you down instead of protecting their flag.

One of the best places to deploy clamp turrets in the enemy base is the enemy generator room. That way, after you take out the generators, the repair guys charge in and get nailed. Repeatedly. Another good place is on the ceiling over an inventory station.

Always beacon your deployed stations with a yellow flag!

Memorize the location of repair packs in all bases. This makes for a longer camp.

If you can't get into the enemy base, drop an inventory station nearby and use it as a beachhead. A Juggernaut with a shield pack and a few spike turrets can defend that deployable station pretty well and give your team a staging area for mounting attacks.

If you play Team Hunters on Escalade, get a teammate into the central tower in a Juggernaut. Then drop a remote inventory station up there. Keep defending the tower and feeding flags to the Juggernaut until you have enough for a capturer to make a run at the Nexus. You can run up unholy scores this way, especially since the tower turns into a magnet for enemy attackers. You can harvest a ridiculous number of flags if you keep up a sharp defense.

Kelly "Dirty Bill" Asay on piloting:

When you pilot a Shrike, don't move your mouse much, or you'll end up overcompensating and wobbling. Keep your speed as high as you can without using your turbo. The afterburners suck energy from your shields. Fly low, unless you're going for an airborne target. If you're bomber hunting, grab altitude first and come at the enemy from the side. To avoid missiles, dive. Don't climb, since the Shrike chugs at climbing without the boost. If you've kept your speed up, diving provides plenty of extra velocity for outrunning missiles.

Craig "jimmy" Maitlen on sucker tricks:

My favorite trick lately is on Hunters. When I've collected a half-dozen flags or so, I grab a satchel pack from inventory. Then I cruise out and find a likely location with good visibility and drop the flags in plain sight. Finally, I deploy the satchel charge in the middle of them and swoop back and forth like I'm trying to pick up flags. Eventually, other players come jetting over to chase me off and take the flags. Boom-baby-boom! I swing back to inventory for another satchel and start over.

Brad "BigDevDawg" Heinz on effective movement:

In Rabbit, disc jumping is a good way to distance yourself from your pursuers—just make sure you have enough health before trying it. When playing Hunters on Casern Cavite, the hole in the roof of the big central building lets me capture without too many hassles. Not many people think about that route.

Blake "Hexabolic" Hutchins on defense:

Find a nice out-of-the-way spot and take manual control of any team turret from the Command Circuit—including the one on the MPB. Enemies who expect to waltz by that turret with cloaking or jammer packs get a nasty surprise when you gun them down.

The inventory system has shortcuts that let you make quick pack swaps without opening the inventory screen. For example, Ctrl-numpad 8 gives you the spider clamp turret pack. Ctrl-numpad 1 gives you the shield pack. If you're a turret monkey on defense, this feature rocks.

Mines are really effective against ground vehicles. If you face an incoming tank, you're better off throwing mines in front of it than blazing away at the driver. If you're cloaked on offense, drop mines in front of an enemy's vehicle station ramp to snuff Wildcats right off the pad.

When driving the Beowulf, don't use the afterburners. They suck energy from shields and firepower. You aren't using the tank for its agility, so the boost makes you way too vulnerable. On maps with water, go for a cruise. On water, the Beowulf makes a great floating artillery that's hard for infantry to reach. Plus, nobody can use mines on you out there.

In Siege more than in any other game, you must know the map. Attackers have to kill the generators to get to the switch, so whether you're on offense or defense, you'd better know where you need to go. Many a game has been lost because the defense didn't get to their generators fast enough.

Finally, a good tailgunner rig is a Juggernaut with ammunition pack, flares, chaingun, and missile launcher. This gives you 18 flares to throw off incoming missiles and plenty of ammo to fire at enemy Shrikes.

NASCAR Racing 4

Haven't raced before? Let a senior designer guide you on your first ride

by Richard Yasi, senior designer at Papyrus Racing Games

NASCAR Racing 4 (N4) is the most realistic racing simulation ever developed for the PC. As in real life, it requires a great deal of discipline and concentration to drive the car right up to—but not beyond—its limits, and it requires many laps of practice in order to be able to recognize just where those limits are. Given enough practice and patience, you'll reach the point of being able to push the car right to the edge while racing door-to-door with 40 other cars. It won't happen overnight, but when it does, you'll understand how exciting and rewarding sim racing can be, and why we sim racing "grognards" are so passionate about it.

With that in mind, this guide is intended mainly to help novice players get up to speed with a minimum of frustration. Sim racing veterans may find some of these tips useful as well.

I: DRIVING FUNDAMENTALS

DON'T GO TOO FAST

This is a common mistake made by almost everyone—veterans included. N4 isn't like virtually every other driving game ever created because you can't just hop in, mash the gas pedal to the floor, and dodge cars until you cross the finish line. In N4, you're at the helm of a 750-horsepower, rear-wheel-drive beast that has been painstakingly modeled to behave as realistically as possible. In other words, it's not an easy thing to drive. If it were, we'd have no reason to watch NASCAR's finest duke it out every Sunday afternoon. So remember—just like when you first started driving for real, take it easy out there and pay close attention to how the car reacts to your control inputs. In N4, if you just hop in and floor it, you're going to wind up frustrated and in the wall.

USE PROPER VISUALIZATION

As you are driving around the track, concentrate not on where you are, but on where you will be in the next 4 to 5 seconds. When you see the next corner in the distance, visualize steering into it, taking the ideal path through it (denoted by the shaded racing groove), and coming out of it. Remember, the sooner you can anticipate a problem, the smaller the adjustment you'll need to make in order to correct it.

USE THE THROTTLE AND BRAKE TO STEER

In low-speed driving, when the tires have plenty of available grip, the steering wheel controls the steering, while the throttle and brake control the speed. However, once speed increases to the point at which the tires start to reach their limit of adhesion, the car's rotation is controlled more directly by the weight distribution on the front and rear wheels, making the throttle and brake the primary steering controls. Braking will cause weight to transfer to the front of the car, making it want to turn more. Applying the throttle will cause weight to transfer to the rear of the car, making it want to turn less. Both of these statements are true only up to a point, however. Once the limit of adhesion is exceeded, the opposite effects occur: Too much brake will cause the car to plow forward and refuse to turn, and too much throttle will cause the rear of the car to snap around and spin.

A quick way of testing this is to go to a track with long corners (like Atlanta) and do this: Go through a corner fairly quickly, using about half throttle. Without altering the steering, gently let up on the throttle. The car should turn to the inside. In the next corner, start at half throttle, don't alter the steering, and gently add more throttle. The car should push up the track to the outside.

The key to mastering car control is properly anticipating these effects and compensating for them by using the steering wheel, and there's only one way to do that: practice.

BEWARE OF TRAILING THROTTLE OVERSTEER

Trailing throttle oversteer can occur when you lift off the throttle quickly while cornering. The car's weight suddenly shifts forward, the rear end gets light, and the car quickly starts to rotate. Without proper steering compensation, it's easy for it to go into a spin. You'll find that this is more of an issue at flat tracks, where there isn't a lot of banking to help keep the rear end from coming around. To avoid trailing throttle oversteer, gently "roll out" of the throttle rather than abruptly lifting off it.

BE SMOOTH

Since the throttle and brake are used to steer the car, you need to be smooth when it comes to applying them. Just as you wouldn't violently jerk the steering wheel back and forth, don't totally mash or lift off the throttle and brake. Apply both the throttle and brake gradually, and you'll have far fewer unscheduled meetings with the wall.

Smoothness is also very important when it comes to preserving your tires. A smooth, steady line with minimal "wandering" will be less taxing on your tires, and in a long race that translates to fewer pit stops and a better chance of a good finish.

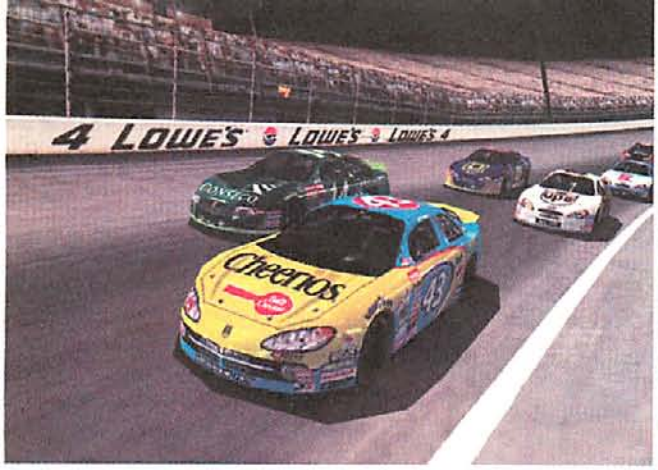
LEARN THE TRACKS

Another obvious point, but very important: There is no substitute for seat time, and there are no shortcuts here. You'll need to get out there and learn what makes each track tick. To be successful at the oval tracks, you'll need to know more than just how high the banking is. Some of them have highly abrasive surfaces that eat tires like crazy. Some are paved with asphalt, some with concrete, and some with both. Pay attention to how the car reacts differently on different surfaces. Some tracks have banked turns that roll off nice and gently, allowing you to take a lower line and get back on the throttle early, while others have abrupt transitions that force you to take a higher line and "diamond" the corner. The road courses are another matter entirely, requiring many laps just to learn their layouts, and many more to learn how to actually race on them.

To get a real feel for how the cars handle, start out at Michigan or California. These are wide, forgiving oval tracks that require the driver to lift off the throttle in the corners.

STAY OUT OF THE GARAGE!

Beginners shouldn't even think about tinkering with the car's setup until they can lap smoothly and consistently using the default setups. The reasoning is simple: Without an understanding of why the car reacts the way it does, and without a smooth, proven driving technique, the best car setup in the world can be useless. Both of those things can be acquired only with considerable seat time. Experimenting in the garage should be attempted only after the player has accumulated enough experience to determine that the car's setup—not his driving technique—is what is preventing him from achieving better lap times.









II: DRIVING TO WIN

TO PASS, MAXIMIZE YOUR EXIT SPEED

Maximizing exit speed is a key to passing in NASCAR because the cars are so evenly matched. They call it "getting a run off the corner," and it entails getting back on the throttle earlier than your opponent. The sooner you get back on the throttle, the more speed you'll be carrying at the exit of the corner. You'll then be able to use that extra speed where it matters most—on the straight. To pull this off, take a slightly higher line on entry and a lower line on exit. You'll have to rotate the car more than usual in order to set up a lower exit line, so you may lose some time early in the corner, but by getting back on the throttle earlier than your opponent, you'll more than make up that deficit with a speed advantage that will carry all the way down to the next turn.

Of course, the downside to this method is that it leaves you vulnerable early in the corner. While you're taking your higher line, a car can sneak underneath you, ruining your exit and delaying the point at which you'll be able to get back on the throttle. So before using this technique, make sure you don't have a car right on your tail.

Practice Your Pit Stops

Under green flag conditions, an extra second spent in the pits can translate to several football fields out on the track. A good pit stop involves far more than the 16 seconds it typically takes your crew to fill you up and change your tires. When it comes to actually driving the car, a pit stop consists of six "tasks":

- Pulling off the track and getting down to the pit road speed limit.
- Traveling down the pit road to your stall.
- Pulling into the stall and parking the car in the proper position.
- Pulling out of the stall and getting up to the pit road speed limit.
- Traveling down the pit road to the pit exit.
- Accelerating back up to racing speed and merging with race traffic.

Keep in mind that you are losing time from the beginning of the first step right up to the completion of the last step. The entire process can take close to a minute, and it always amazes me how even the most lightning-quick drivers out there bungle either the first or third step of the process. By taking a few minutes to figure out how to perform the first step as quickly as possible, and by repeatedly practicing the third step, you're virtually guaranteed to make up positions in the pits.

TUNE ONE THING AT A TIME

If I've heard it once, I've heard it a thousand times: "I made so many changes to my car setup that I can't remember where I started." This can happen very easily, especially when you're unhappy with several things. As tempting and as potentially time saving as it may be, resist the urge to make a bunch of changes all at once. Remember, the components of the car all interact with one another, and that means that making a change to one element can yield multiple results, not all of them desirable. This is particularly true when making changes to the various suspension components.

The solution to this common problem involves nothing more than using common sense. Change one component, save the setup under a new name, and try it out. If you like it, use it as your new baseline. If you don't, go back to the original and try something else.

Well, that just about wraps it up. Good luck, and see you out on the track!

USEFUL LINKS

WWW.PAPY.COM Papyrus Racing Games' home page.

WWW.COMMUNITY.SIERRA.COM Sierra's Forums page. Click on the appropriate link to go to the N4 forum.

WWW.SPORTPLANET.COM/TEAM-LIGHTSPEED Contains highly informative track guides and other driving tips.

WWW.SASCAR.COM The best site on the Web for car setup hints and tricks.

Readers Tips

DIABLO II

I have a DIABLO II strategy. This is a variant of the popular subclass of the paladin, the "hammerdin." Here's a list of the items and skills you will need:

- Iceblink (unique splint mail)
- A level 23+ hammerdin
- A mid-damage weapon (it's important that it doesn't inflict too much or too little damage)
- Decent levels in the following skills: concentration, blessed hammer, and zeal.
- Both mana and life leech (whether via skills or items).

So here's what you do: Go into a big open area, and get surrounded by monsters. Then use zeal (while wearing Iceblink), and freeze all the monsters nearby. This will create a wall that other monsters can't get through. Then cast Blessed Hammer so that it spirals outside of this ring of frozen monsters, killing everything but the wall. The frozen wall will eventually die or become unfrozen, so use zeal again to make a new wall, while at the same time leeching back any mana spent from casting Blessed Hammer and leeching life that ranged monsters took from you. Then go back to hammering all the outer monsters. Repeat until area is clear. **–Jesse Burnett**

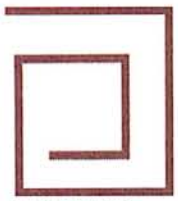
Thanks to Jesse's tip on how to make a useful paladin in DIABLO II, he's snagged himself copies of STARLANCER and FLYING HEROES. Enjoy!

Easter Eggs

BLACK & WHITE

Here's an odd little Easter Egg that'll let you hear straight from the designers at Lionhead themselves:

In Land 1, perform the two Gestures at right in order (the first one is the Leash, and the second resembles the Fireball).



1. FIRST THIS

You'll hear a telephone ringing. Look for a thin, long stretch of land (it's near the Aztec village), zoom in close, and you should see the phone booth. Even though it's outside of your influence, you can click on it to hear some choice words from the Lionhead staff.



2. THEN THIS

DVD: CHARLIE'S ANGELS

From the disc's main menu, go to the Special Features section. On each of the three Special Features menus that are in this section a hidden feature can be found. On the first page, highlight "G'ed up" and then press the Right arrow on your remote control to highlight Cameron Diaz's midsection. Press Enter now and you will see a 20-second montage clip of the Angels.

On the second page of the Special Features section, highlight "Wired Angels" and then press the Left arrow key on your remote control. This will highlight a box on Bosley's chest. Pressing Enter now will give you some behind-the-scenes footage featuring Drew Barrymore as she's having a plaster cast made of her face.

On the third Special Features page, highlight the arrow pointing left on the menu screen and then press the Right arrow key on your remote control. This will highlight another box, which will give you access to a short behind-the-scenes sequence including a more than passable impression of Christopher Walken by Sam Rockwell.

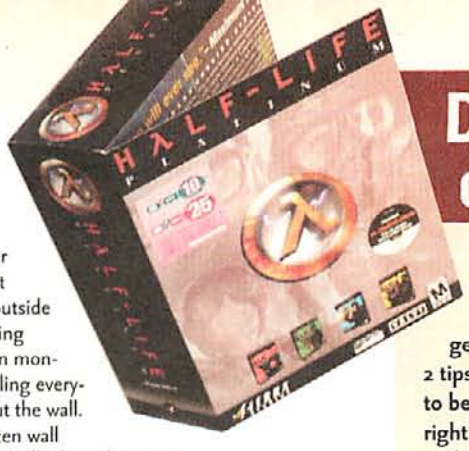
Patches

FALLOUT TACTICS: The big patch has arrived at last. Not only does it make numerous bug fixes, but it includes a few gameplay tweaks as well. Changes range from an all-new Perk (Death Sense) to fixing the current set of Perks and fixing prices and recruits. Even the missions have been altered, to give more loot or add more entryways to various parts of the map. All in all, this is the patch you want.

TRIBES 2: Once again, this is the big patch. The biggest gameplay alterations are waypoint colors in Siege mode and the way Flares work. With the new waypoint system in Siege, each team has an easier time coordinating its offense or defense, while the Flares will now attract only one missile at a time. The patch also makes numerous fixes across the board.

ICEWIND DALE: HEART OF WINTER: Another hefty patch here. Some items that weren't quite working (Lucky Scimitar was, in reality, not very lucky at all) are now right and proper, and spells that were messing up your characters have been fixed as well. Also, the new levels and difficulty options for the main game made for some funky glitches, and these have been fixed, too.

KOHAN: IMMORTAL SOVEREIGNS: The niftiest change here has to be the option allowing three people to play a multiplayer match on a LAN with only one CD key. Also, fans of Gamespy Arcade can now use it without crashing the game. Oh, and you can turn off those unit acknowledgement sounds, finally, so you don't have to hear your hero declaring his will to destroy the shadow every freakin' time he goes somewhere.



Dirty Trick of the Month

The Dirty Tricks just keep on coming, and we're being quite the nasty gamers, no? We're getting bombarded with RED ALERT 2 tips, though. We know people have to be playing other games out there, right? Either way, keep those dirty tricks flowing. The prize this month, in tribute to all the HALF-LIFE mania going on in this issue, goes to a trick for TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC:

FROM JERRY YAN:

"Hey, I've got a good (and funny) dirty TFC trick. See, you go into a highly traveled area littered with corpses from firefights, and go for the corpse nearest to the enemy base. Make sure you're the Scout class for maximum effect. Litter all of your caltrops onto the corpse, and they'll end up being concentrated in one place. Now, cover up your caltrops with a couple of ammo packs (one you dropped, and go pick up and drop another one). If an enemy comes soon, naturally he'll go for the ammo packs, not seeing the caltrops. Unless he's a heavy weapons guy full of health and ammo, the poor victim will either die from the nine caltrops, or get severely injured. Great when you want kills and captures."

Thanks, Jerry Yan, for giving us the best way to frustrate an enemy team. You just got yourself a free copy of GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO. We're still afflicted with HALF-LIFE mania, so next month's winner gets a copy of HALF-LIFE PLATINUM EDITION.

SEND US YOUR TIPS

Send your tips, tricks, and strategies to CGW_LETTERS@ZIFFDAVIS.COM (please put CGTIPS in the subject line).

We'll publish three submissions each month. Please send genuine tips or strategies instead of cheat codes cut-and-pasted from the Internet.

One winner will get something pulled at random from the Computer Gaming World BozoBin©!

http://www.gamespot.com/theonlywayyouwilleverbeaninja/

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by Thomas L. McDonald • cgwletters@ziffdavis.com

Et Tu, EA?

Origin Systems is dead—but Richard Garriott may be back

The death of Origin Systems comes as a sad blow to those who have associated the company with quality gaming since the early days of ULTIMA and WING COMMANDER. Origin parent Electronic Arts, which had already stripped the Origin branding from its boxes, signed the death warrant when it abruptly pulled the plug on ULTIMA WORLDS ONLINE: ORIGIN. The team working on this new, fully 3D, massively multiplayer game was nearing beta when they were summarily sacked.

The Party Line

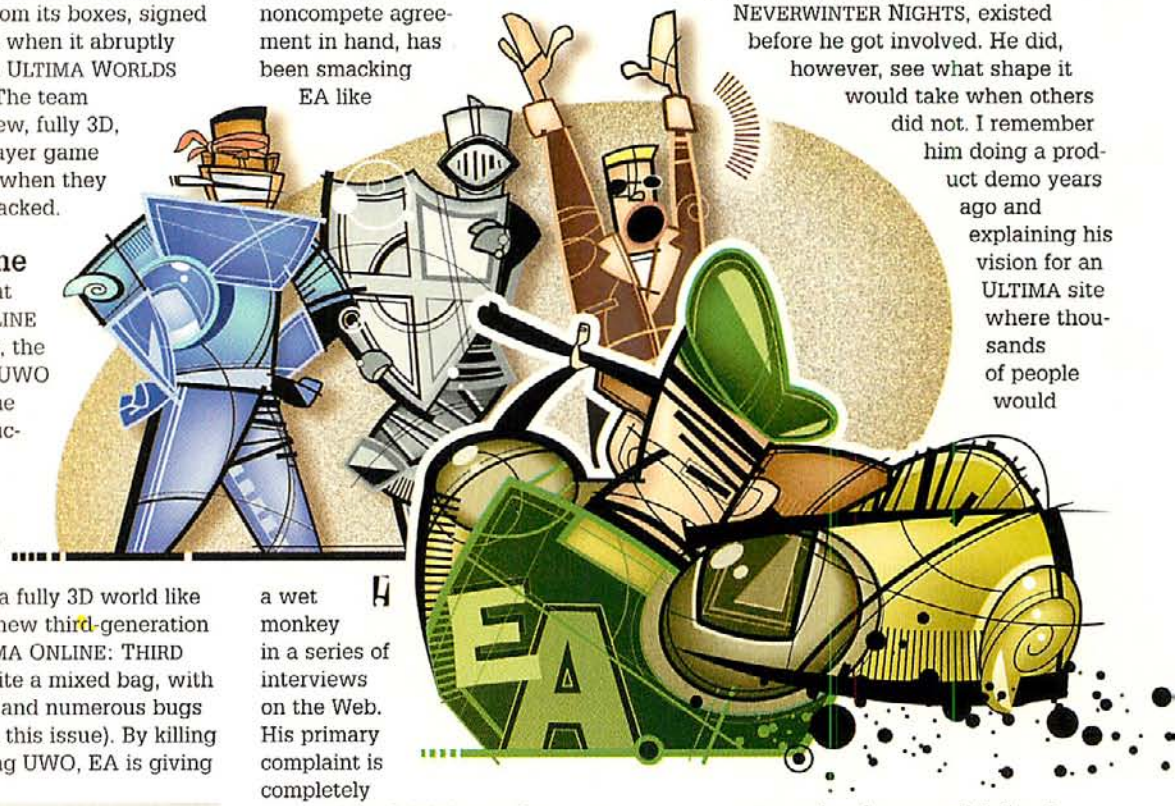
EA reasoned that since ULTIMA ONLINE itself was thriving, the parallel launch of UWO would undercut the company's own successful product. This logic works only if you buy the notion that no one would want UO to evolve into a fully 3D world like EVERQUEST. The new third-generation UO product, ULTIMA ONLINE: THIRD DAWN, is itself quite a mixed bag, with splotchy graphics and numerous bugs (see our review in this issue). By killing the forward-looking UWO, EA is giving its subscriber base the distinct impression that it intends to coast on old designs.

Garriott Returns

The peripatetic Richard Garriott, with a freshly expired noncompete agreement in hand, has been smacking EA like a wet monkey in a series of interviews on the Web. His primary complaint is completely reasonable: Origin's people were an incredibly valuable business asset that should not have been thrown away so capriciously. No fool, Garriott is snapping up the cast-aside Origin staffers and creating a new online gaming company. We don't know what they're doing yet, but since some of the best talent in the business will be involved it will be something to watch.

A lot of people have this image of Garriott as some borderline whack job in tights and a crown. They make the mistake of confusing image and substance. He is, in fact, one of the four of five founding visionaries of computer gaming who is still productive and relevant. It would be hyperbole to call him the father of the MMORPG (massively multiplayer online role-playing game), since MUDs and several other smaller-scale RPGs, like the original NEVERWINTER NIGHTS, existed before he got involved. He did, however, see what shape it would take when others did not. I remember him doing a product demo years ago and explaining his vision for an ULTIMA site where thousands of people would quest together for a monthly fee. I could barely get a stable game of DOOM going on a 28.8K modem, and he was going to have thousands of people playing at once? And paying for it? I thought he was nuts.

If we are indeed getting ORIGIN II, with Richard Garriott at the helm and people like Starr Long involved, what they do will be vital to multiplayer gaming. Whatever complaints you may have about UO, you have to admit they made it huge. They showed us it was possible. CGW



EDITOR'S NOTE

In April, Electronic Arts shocked the gaming world by abruptly canceling ULTIMA WORLDS ONLINE: ORIGIN, the highly anticipated sequel to ULTIMA ONLINE. Though game cancellations are nothing new, this one was astounding, given its high-profile status in the burgeoning massively multiplayer market. This month, we asked two of our Inside Gaming writers, Desslock (Role-Playing) and Tom McDonald (Massively Multiplayer) to weigh in on the decision.

by Stefan "Desslock" Janicki • desslock@desslock.com

We Destroy Worlds

ULTIMA is gone, but fans help keep the name alive

Electronic Arts has systematically dismantled Origin Systems, which was once perhaps the greatest gaming company in the business. Times are ridiculously tough right now for gaming companies, so it's not surprising that there's been a wave of layoffs, cancellations, and cutbacks recently. But the destruction of Origin wasn't a recent decision justified by a rapidly changing marketplace—it was just the natural result of years of really questionable decisions.

Several years ago, EA opted to turn Origin into an online-only gaming company, in spite of the fact that Origin had two of the most successful single-player franchises (and best brands) in gaming: WING COMMANDER and ULTIMA. Additional games in those series were canceled, as were sequels in Origin's CRUSADER: NO REMORSE franchise.

Company representatives justified that decision by highlighting the commercial success of ULTIMA ONLINE, which, in spite of being prematurely released in September 1997, went on to become one of EA's most profitable games. But despite the emphasis on online-only games, neither Origin nor EA has released a single game in the genre since ULTIMA ONLINE and, with hindsight, the decision to abandon Origin's single-player franchises seems even more short-sighted when you consider the recent successes of EA's other single-player games. In spite of several attempts by some EA managers to cancel THE SIMS, which was developed by subsidiary Maxis, that game earned more money in 2000 than any of EA's online ventures.

Then last year EA decided to hastily release the last of Origin's single-player games, ULTIMA ASCENSION, a commercially disastrous decision that destroyed any remaining goodwill gamers held toward Origin. After that debacle, the company was free to focus on its ambitious online projects: WING COMMANDER and a couple of sequels to ULTIMA ONLINE. But inexplicably, the WING COMMANDER game was canceled, and most of its development team ended up joining Verant—Origin's arch rival in the online world and creator of EVERQUEST—where they now work on STAR WARS GALAXIES.

EA apparently justified that decision because a "similar product," EARTH & BEYOND, was already well into development at EA subsidiary Westwood Studios. In other words, EA abandoned the franchise that had produced one of the best-selling games of all time, WING COMMANDER 3, in order to focus on another space sim completely lacking in brand recognition. Concurrent with that decision, the founder of Origin, Richard "Lord British" Garriott, left the company he created. Origin was abandoned as a brand name, but ULTIMA ONLINE 2 was renamed ULTIMA WORLDS ONLINE: ORIGIN to allow the name to retain some significance.

> **"Origin has capitulated in the battle for online gaming—a genre it made mainstream through ULTIMA ONLINE..."**

But then EA made the shocking announcement that UWO: ORIGIN and all projects other than the ongoing maintenance of ULTIMA ONLINE would be canceled. EA management may have been concerned that there was no way the game would make its target 2001 release date and balked at continuing to endure the project's sizeable financial burn, but it's difficult to rationalize what seems to be a tremendously shortsighted decision. Under EA, Origin has essentially capitulated in the battle for online gaming—a genre it made mainstream through ULTIMA ONLINE, and one that EA previously announced was promising enough to merit the abandonment of Origin's established franchises and more proven business lines.

EA's new "plan" for Origin is to focus solely on supporting four-year-old ULTIMA ONLINE, a game already being soundly trounced by its primary existing competitor, with several next-generation games on the verge of release. At least from the perspective of PC gamers, EA seems to be another large gaming company (like Mattel and Hasbro) that just doesn't "get it." Inexplicable. CGW

Where Can I get my ULTIMA fix?

ULTIMA zealots continue to try to resuscitate the series through these efforts:

ULTIMA IX dialogue patch:

Many fans were disappointed with ULTIMA IX's simplistic plot and dialogue that wasn't consistent with ULTIMA lore. The unofficial patch at www.fansforultima.com attempts to correct those inconsistencies and tie the storyline more closely to past games in the series.

THE BLACK GATE in Windows:

Exult (exult.sourceforge.net) allows perhaps the best game in the series, ULTIMA VII, to easily run within a modern Windows environment.

LAZARUS PROJECT:

At icdweb.cc.purdue.edu/%7Efrazieri, this is a project to recreate ULTIMA V using the tools that will ship with DUNGEON SIEGE.



ULTIMA I Remake:

There's also a remake of ULTIMA I in the works. A downloadable demo is already available at www.peroxide.dk/ultima.

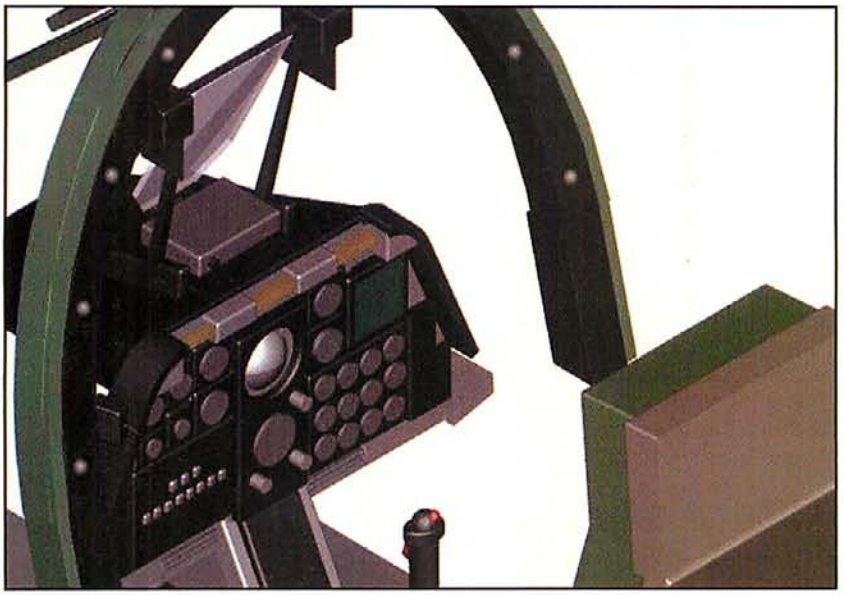
Of course, there's no guarantee that EA won't stop these projects from using EA's intellectual property, but since the projects will be available free, maybe EA won't be a bully and stomp them.

In terms of commercial projects inspired by the ULTIMA series, there's always Jeff Vogel's shareware RPGs, which feature gameplay and a graphical perspective similar to those in the classic ULTIMA games. A significant demo of Vogel's latest game, AVERNUM 2, is available on our CD this month, so check it out!

by Gordon Berg • grognard@concentric.net

New Life for Old Flight Sims

Third-party mods and hacks run amok





Right now it's just a placeholder, but TeamSuperHornet is close to importing a fully functional A10 Thunderbolt into JANE'S F/A-18.

Regardless of which side you take on the "Are flight sims dead?" issue, I think you'll agree that they're in a definite lull. Sure, titles such as DID's EF TYPHOON and Maddox Games' IL-2 STURMOVIK give us hope and show that there are still some developers out there willing to find a way to get their sims made. But then Electronic Arts adds AIR WARRIOR 4 to its trophy mantle of canceled projects, alongside JANE'S A-10 and JANE'S ATTACK SQUADRON, reminding us how most publishers feel about sims these days.

So what's a flight sim aficionado to do? Confronted with a relative lack of new toys, many sim players are busy making hacks and mods for their old ones.

All Mod Sims

In contrast to the countless number of mods in the first-person shooter scene, mods have been pretty rare in the world of flight sims. The notable exception has been the work on Microsoft's venerable FLIGHT SIMULATOR franchise, the most popular flight sim series ever. The very nature of its open-ended architecture, coupled with the mindset of "encouraged change" on the part of its developers, has practically guaranteed that each new iteration of FLIGHT SIMULATOR will be a success before it even hits store shelves.

Perhaps in an effort to emulate this approach, a couple of companies have recently announced sims designed to let users make modifications. Targetware is putting out an online sim, TARGET KOREA, for example. According to the company, "The majority of future new planes, flight models, cockpits, terrains, ground objects, personalized skins, etc., will be designed by the community at large." Meanwhile, Third Wire Productions—the new company from Tsuyoshi "TK" Kawahito of LONGBOW/EAW fame—has announced that its upcoming '60s-era combat sim plans to support the user community "in creating after-market modifications, including user-created missions, campaigns, maps, and aircraft."

It's a nice thought, but these companies may be in for a sad surprise. Witness what happened with Activision's SCREAMIN' DEMONS OVER EUROPE. It has attracted a very active and vocal minority that is cranking out planes like you wouldn't believe, but the game toils in obscurity. Why? Well, a sim needs to have enough going for it on its own to be worth the attention of those who would want to hack and rework it.

The best example of a mod-attracting flight sim is FALCON 4, of course. Despite all its problems, even after its final official patch, the promise of what it could become is inspiring. Again, this shows that designers who incorporate after-market modifications into their plans for success better make sure their sim is compelling enough on its own to attract those who'd want to tweak it. Don't expect the end user to make the sim for you.

New Tricks

Still, given the volume of hacking going on, you can't blame developers for wanting to try to find a way to tap into all of this frenzied end-user development. In addition to the work that's been done with FALCON 4, there's been an almost equal effort with EUROPEAN AIR WAR. The new PACIFIC TIDE conversion is the closest you'll get to a modern-day PACIFIC AIR WAR.

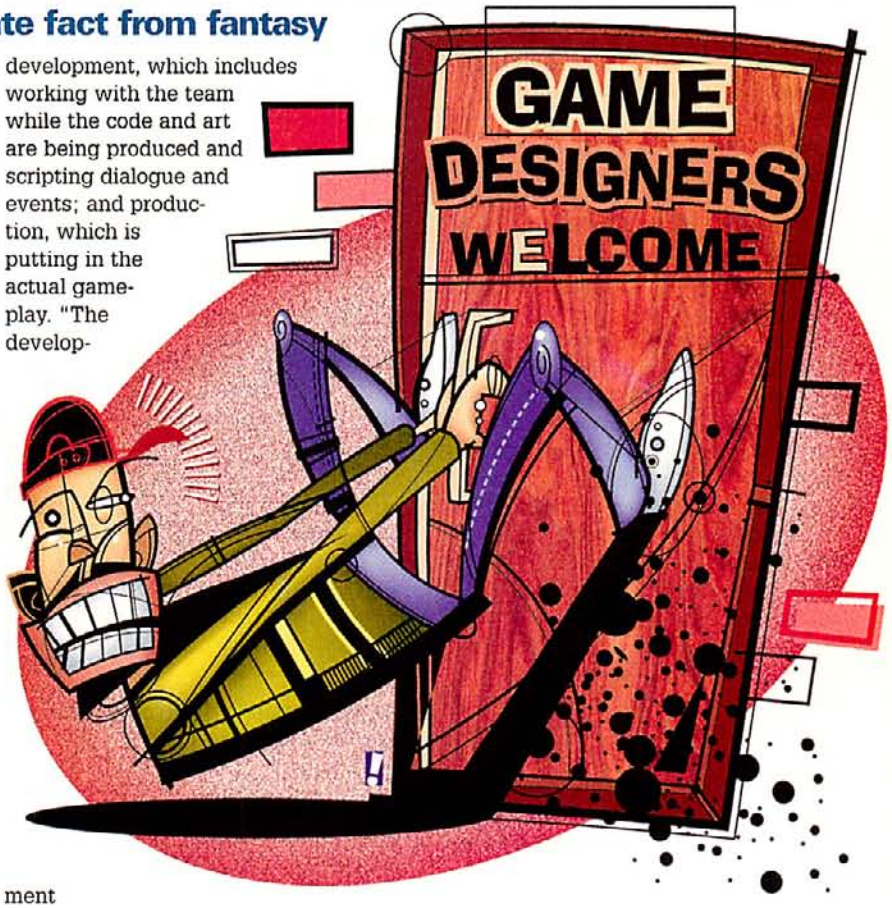
And now that you've most likely got a machine that can finally run either JANE'S F/A-18 or JANE'S WW2F at a decent frame-rate, you'll find that some truly amazing work has happened with both of these great titles. For starters, someone has made an ACMI utility for F/A-18. The best part, though, is that they've found a way to import the F-15E from JANE'S F-15 and are working on including a functional F-14 and A-10. As for JANE'S WW2F, can you say dynamic campaign?

In the coming months, I'll take a closer look at some of these efforts and show you what a motivated flight-sim fan can do. CGW

by Mark Asher • marka@cdmnet.com

So You Wanna Be a Game Designer?

Some industry pros separate fact from fantasy



There's good news and bad news if you want to work as a game designer. The good news is that you don't have to be a programmer or an artist, so if you're lost when it comes to C++ or can't draw a rectangle, you can still hope. The bad news is that no matter how many cool ideas you have for games, you probably can't walk in off the street and land a job as a game designer.

"It's pretty much impossible for someone outside the game industry to jump directly in and get a job with an existing company as a game designer," says PopTop's Phil Steinmeyer.

Brian Reynolds of Big Huge Games agrees. "It's a tough profession to get into, partially because so many people want to do it. Would-be game designers should realize that there's really no such thing as an entry-level game design position."

The Role of the Designer

So what does a game designer do, anyway? "The designer is responsible for defining the vision of the product to make it fun and exciting," says Larry Holland of Totally Games. "He or she focuses on game mechanics and structure, including what elements will be in the game." There's also a great deal of writing and planning involved.

"Design docs are often 100 pages or more," says Ken Levine of Irrational Games. Levine breaks down the game designer's responsibilities into three broad phases: conception, which includes writing the design document; development, which includes working with the team while the code and art are being produced and scripting dialogue and events; and production, which is putting in the actual gameplay. "The development phase is dreadful. Everything's broken, nothing works properly, and there's nothing to really show except on paper," says Levine.

Some designers take on additional responsibilities. Brian Reynolds, for one, wears a number of hats. "As the lead designer on our Big Huge Game, my responsibilities include being the project leader—overall creative vision and guidance for the team and project; the game rules—what are the rules of the game, what units will we have, how will they work, etc.; the game balance—what adjustments need to be made in the game to make it more fun; and coding game rules and computer player AI!"

The last is an unusual responsibility for a designer, but designers who are also programmers can bring their own visions to life in a very efficient way.

Perhaps one of the most important elements of being a designer is leadership. Chris Taylor of Gas Powered Games puts it in perspective. "It's bringing the vision together so that it meets everyone's expectations. It's not enough to say, 'I'm the designer, I will do it my way.' That doesn't work. You need to keep everyone rowing the boat together, in one direction, and smiling the whole time. *Smile, damn it!*" CGW

Talking the Talk

Here's some slang you can toss around when you've landed that game company interview.

- **Hack it in:** Write the code quickly and without too much finesse. It will probably need to be replaced later.
- **It falls out for free:** A popular and abused saying meaning that when the code is written to solve one problem, it will solve others without any additional work. Not only is this overused, but it's hardly ever true.
- **Pushback:** When people don't like your idea, it's a nice way of saying they don't agree.
- **Grognard:** Beyond geek. Super hardcore fan, which is what most designers are.
- **Cabal:** Coined by Valve, it refers to a design team responsible for defining a feature or storyline in the game.
- **NIS:** Noninteractive.
- **Stamina juice:** Coffee.

by Bruce Geryk • ceremony@net66.com

Big Wars, Little Battles

Can strategic-level games go tactical?

It seems like wargamers have been clamoring for a strategic-level wargame for some time now. The formation of 2 By 3 Games (**www.2by3games.com**) and its upcoming publication of PACIFIC WAR: 1941-1945 should go some way toward granting that wish, but what I've heard from some people is a desire for more than just global control.

In both posts to Usenet and email to me at *CGW*, wargamers have said that they want designers to take advantage of today's advanced hardware and give them strategic- and tactical-level games in one package. That means a game that plays at the strategic level until combat is initiated; when the scene shifts to battle itself, you fight at the tactical level with full control over your forces.

Few wargames have attempted anything this ambitious—the only two fairly recent examples are SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR and NAPOLEON 1813-14. In the latter game, though, the simulation was really only theaterwide (the wars of German liberation) and didn't include such strategic aspects as economic control over the whole empire. The sense I'm getting is that a lot of wargamers want both: complete strategic control over production, research, and military deployment, and then the ability to micromanage the tactical battles. That's a tall order.



A FLAWED DIAMOND NAPOLEON 1813-14 could have been a classic.

Slow Down There, Boss

There are a few problems with this. One is that for periods much past the American Civil War, this wouldn't work well except on the most abstract level. Until the mid-19th century, armies fought as semi-independent units. Napoleon's comprehensive defeat of Prussia in 1806 and Grant's Wilderness Campaign against Lee in 1864 didn't involve continuous front lines; instead, armies operated as individual maneuver units. For this reason, it's a lot easier to justify an area-movement system (as in SHOGUN) for a game about 19th-century warfare than it is for one about modern combat. Point-to-point or area-movement games work much better when trying to incorporate tactical and strategic elements than hex games do. If you made the game hex-based but allowed individual battles to be fought as real-time games, either you'd have too many battles to manage or the individual battles would be too large to properly model without making an entirely new game. There would also be the problem of incorporating adjacent units into a battle, accounting for reinforcements, and the like.

A World War II game of this nature would be abstract to the extent of almost not being a wargame at all. One correspondent asked for an AXIS & ALLIES game that simply replaced the die rolls with real-time combat. This would, of course, be possible, but would it be a wargame? I'm not sure I understand the attraction of this kind of hybrid.

To my mind, the sorry state of strategic and operational games could be improved somewhat not by trying to emulate tactical games and their 3D wizardry directly, but by incorporating them intact into a larger design. But the final design should be an actual wargame.



BEER AND PRETZELS AXIS & ALLIES is fun, but it's hardly a historical wargame.

What's on Your Wish List?

I'd love to see a game that uses the SHOGUN engine to model the Roman Civil War, or a game that uses Kevin Zucker's outstanding operational system for Napoleonic warfare to create a WARGAMER-like version of Napoleon's campaigns, perhaps in conjunction with a larger economic and political system as in the classic EMPIRES IN ARMS. But an AXIS & ALLIES–type game in which you fight the battles using a real-time strategy engine akin to SUDDEN STRIKE leaves me cold. Am I nuts? Let me know your thoughts, and in a subsequent column I'll revisit the issue, having "taken the pulse" of the readership, as it were. CGW

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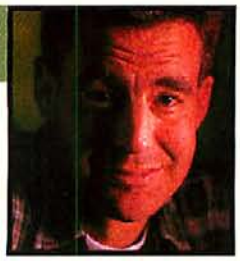
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by Jeff Green



Worst Editor-in-Chief Ever!

Please, someone tell us this was some kind of clerical error

Five years at this dump, and finally, I'm editor-in-chief. I'd like to say it came as a big surprise to me, but since I was the one who doctored those photos of now-disgraced former-editor-in-chief George Jones prancing naked in the hallways with the Lara Croft blowup doll, I won't bother.

In any event, the coup d'etat is complete and the Jeff Green Era is about to begin. All hail me. Although my plans for this magazine are still sketchy at best—other than to give myself a big fat raise and maybe a new car—look for things to start shaping up around here real soon. *Computer Gaming World 2.0* is on the way, and, with me solidly at the helm, you can expect nothing less than 12 issues a year of something or other, I guess.

It's a bittersweet and somewhat surprising turn of events for me. I was hired in the "old days" of *CGW*, back when all the editors had facial hair (including the women), and the game companies used to actually make computer games instead of just cancel them. If you told me back then that someday I'd be running this magazine, I would have laughed in disbelief and wet myself. In fact, just thinking about it has made me wet myself all over again. Be right back.

***

Honestly, I don't know whether you should congratulate me or offer me your condolences.

Sure, there are lots of great perks in running a national magazine, I admit. There's the money, for one thing. Whereas previously my salary ranked somewhere around the level of undocumented migrant worker or crack whore, I am now raking in a cool $10 million a year, plus options. Suddenly, those past ten miserable years of eating nothing but dry dog food are but a painful, distant memory. Now, for this lucky guy, it's nothing but the fancier and way tastier wet stuff.

Another cool thing is the way everybody sucks up to me now. Not only do I get to win every *CGW* deathmatch, but suddenly, I am full of great ideas—no matter how stupid. I like to sit in meetings now, feet on the conference table, and see just how far I can push it and still get my ass kissed.

Me: I think what this industry needs now is a really good Mac bowling game.

Suck-Up Editor: That's a brilliant idea, sir. I was gonna suggest that myself.

Me: Huh—would you look at that? My coffee cup is empty again!

Suck-Up Editor: Refill coming right up, sir.

"the Jeff Green Era is about to begin. All hail me."

But right around the point where I start really enjoying my newfound power, that's when I get smacked back down to earth, cold and hard. For though I may be the boss of the nitwits who write this magazine, I have to answer to a higher authority myself. The other editors get me for a boss now—but I get the Suits.

Not to paint a dark picture or anything, but most of my days here have become ulcer-inducing, Kafka-esque nightmares as I try to balance the concerns of the evil corporate bean counters on one side of me, with the needs of my overworked, underpaid staff on the other side.

Evil Corporate Bean Counter: So, Jeff, we're thinking of cutting the staff down by 8 more people. Who should we let go?

Me: But there's only 9 of us left, sir.

Evil Corporate Bean Counter: Well that should make it easy, then.

Me: Yes, sir. Permission to shoot myself, sir?

***

It's a pity, really. It's the end of innocence for me here. Suddenly I have to think about the business of this magazine, which, surprisingly, is just not quite as stress-free as playing HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC for six hours at a time. Now, as I find myself mired in the muck of Management, I have an endless stream of decisions to make, both big and small, from figuring out what to put on the cover each month to deciding how long I can let acting art director Jason Babler play with his Spawn action figures in the conference room before making him go back to his desk.

It isn't easy, this boss business, and it's anything but the glamorous life you may be imagining. As I dictate this column now from my new hot tub, sipping a margarita, J-Lo working out the kinks in my back (lower please, honey), I honestly don't know how I'm managing the stress of it all.

But don't worry about me; I'll be fine. And so will *Computer Gaming World*. Just as soon as they realize their mistake and hire a real boss. CGW

The new boss dedicates this month's column to Joey Ramone, coolest geek ever. Gabba gabba hey Joey, and remember, all good cretins go to Heaven. Send email to jeff_green@ziffdavis.com.

Check out the archives of Jeff's Greenspeak columns at **www.computergaming.com**

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- Extreme Game Pack (Dimension™ only)[15], add $99
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- Upgrade Dimension™ Desktops 1-Yr Ltd Warranty[2], 1-Yr At-Home Service[4] to 3-Yr Ltd Warranty[2], 3-Yr At-Home Service[4], add $119

Inspiron™ Notebook Service Upgrades:

- Upgrade Inspiron™ Notebooks with 1-Yr Ltd Warranty[2] and 1-Yr Mail-in Service to:
  - 3-Yr Ltd Warranty[2] and 3-Yr Mail-in Service, add $99
  - 3-Yr Ltd Warranty[2] and 3-Yr On-Site Service[4], add $219



[10]Telephone access (call your phone co. for details) and other surcharges for access may apply. Must register within 90 days of receiving computer and accept DellNet/MSN Terms of Service. You agree to be billed monthly fees after the initial service period. You may cancel service at any time. Offer valid for new customers only in U.S. households and must be over 18 years old with major credit card. Limited time offer. [12]Monthly payment based on 13.99% APR FOR QUALIFIED CUSTOMERS. OFFER VARIES BY CREDITWORTHINESS OF CUSTOMER AS DETERMINED BY LENDER. Under 90 Days Same As Cash feature, interest accrues during first 90 days if balance not paid within 90 days. Customers not eligible for 90 Days Same As Cash feature may be offered standard 48-month financing with APRs ranging from 16.99% to 23.99%. Example: $1,650 purchase price, at 18.99%, 48 monthly payments at $50. Taxes and shipping charges extra, and vary. From American Investment Bank, N.A. to U.S. residents with approved credit. Availability may be limited in some states.

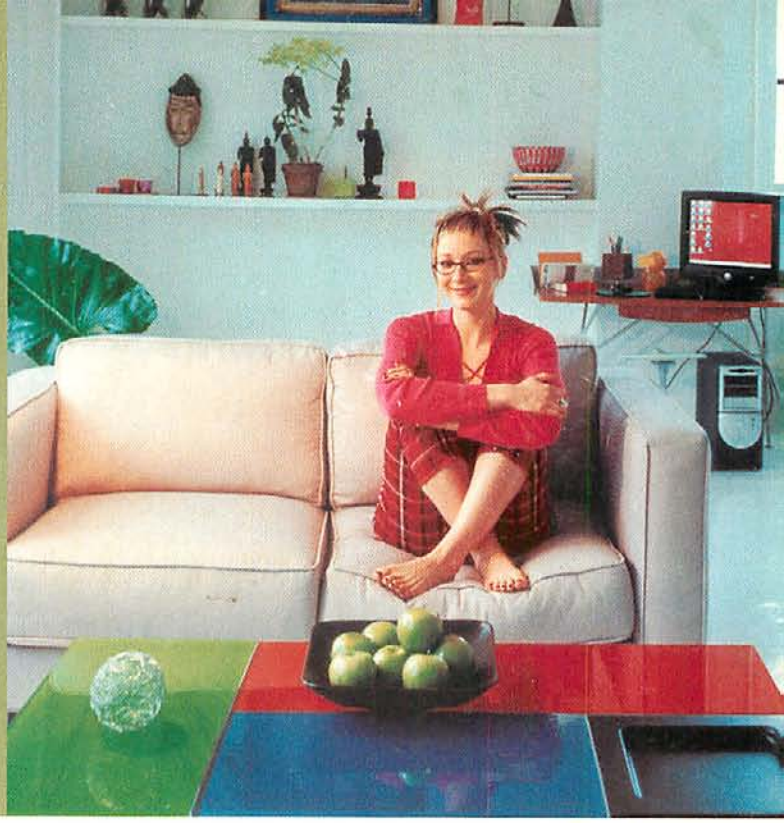
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1.7GHz. my friends are envious. my enemies are scared.





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